

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY

**OU\_216248**

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



ON MYSELF





# ON MYSELF

SELECTIONS FROM AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

EDITED BY  
AMARANATHA JHA, M.A.

*Reader in English, Allahabad University*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS LAHORE

1930



# CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
<i>On Autobiographies</i>	..	.. vii
Benvenuto Cellini	..	.. I
Samuel Pepys	..	.. 37
Jean Jacques Rousseau	..	.. 42
Benjamin Franklin	..	.. 88
Edward Gibbon \	..	.. 105
J. W. von Goethe	..	.. 124
John Stuart Mill	..	.. 143
Robert Louis Stevenson	..	.. 163
John, Viscount Morley	..	.. 189
W. H. Davies	..	.. 201
<i>Notes</i>	..	.. 209



## BENVENUTO CELLINI

It is a duty incumbent on upright and credible men of all ranks, who have performed anything noble or praiseworthy, to record, in their own writing, the events of their lives; yet they should not commence this honourable task before they have passed their fortieth year. Such, at least, is my opinion, now that I have completed my fifty-eighth year, and am settled in Florence, my native place, where, considering the numerous ills that constantly attend human life, I perceive that I have never before been so free from vexations and calamities, or possessed of so great a share of content and health, as at this period. Looking back on some delightful and happy events of my life, and on many misfortunes so truly overwhelming, that the appalling retrospect makes me wonder how I have reached this age of fifty-eight years, in vigour and prosperity, through God's goodness, I have resolved to publish an account of my life. And although men whose exertions have been crowned with any degree of honour, and who have rendered themselves conspicuous to the world, ought, perhaps, to regard only that personal merit to which they owe their celebrity; yet as in this world it is necessary to live like other people, I must, in commencing my narrative, satisfy the public on some few points to which its curiosity is usually directed; the first of which is to ascertain whether a man is descended from a virtuous and ancient family.

My name, then, is Benvenuto Cellini, and I am the son of Maestro Giovanni, the son of Andrea,

## ON MYSELF

the son of Cristofano Cellini; my mother was Madonna Lisabetta, daughter to Stefano Granacci: and both my parents were citizens of Florence. It appears from the ancient chronicles compiled by natives of that city, men highly deserving of credit, that it was built after the model of Rome. This is evident from the vestiges of the Coliseum, and the hot baths, near the Holy Cross: the capitol was where the Old Market is to-day: the Rotunda, which is still entire, was built for a temple of Mars, and is now called San Giovanni's church. This is so evident that it cannot be denied; but the above mentioned structures are of much smaller dimensions than those of Rome. It is said that they were erected by Julius Cæsar, in conjunction with some other Roman patricians, who, having subdued and taken Fiesole, in this very place founded a city, and each of them undertook to erect one of these remarkable edifices. Julius Cæsar had a very gallant officer of the first rank in his army, named Fiorino of Cellini, which is a castle within two miles of Monte Fiascone: this Fiorino having taken up his quarters under Fiesole, where Florence at present stands, to be near the river Arno for the convenience of his army, all the soldiers and others who had any business with that officer used to say, 'Let us go to Fiorenze'; as well because the name of the officer was Fiorino, as because on the spot where he had fixed his headquarters there was great plenty of flowers. Thus in the infancy of the town, the elegant appellation of Florence seeming to Julius Cæsar appropriate, and its allusion to flowers appearing auspicious, he gave it the name of Florence; at the same time paying a compliment to his valiant officer, to whom he was the more attached, because he had promoted

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

him from a very humble station, and considered his merit as in some measure a creation of his own. The other name of *Fluentia*, which the learned inventors and investigators of the connection of names pretend that Florence obtained on account of the Arno's *flowing* through the town, cannot be admitted; because the Tiber flows through Rome, the Po through Ferrara, the Saone through Lyons, the Seine through Paris, which cities have various names, no way derived from the course of those rivers. I believe the matter to be as I have stated, and am of opinion that this city takes its name from the valiant captain Florentius.

I have also learned that there are some of our family of Cellini in Ravenna, a much more ancient city than Florence, and that they are people of quality: there are also some of the family in Pisa, and in several other parts of Christendom; besides a few families that still remain in Tuscany. Most of these have been devoted to arms. It is not many years since a beardless youth, of the name of Luca Cellini, encountered a most valiant and practised soldier, named Francesco da Vicorati, who had often fought in the lists: Luca, who had only courage on his side, vanquished and slew him; evincing such prowess and intrepidity as astonished the spectators, who all expected a contrary result. So that, upon the whole, I think I may safely boast of being descended from valiant ancestors.

How far I have contributed to the honour of my family, which, considering our present condition, arising from well-known causes, and considering my profession, cannot be in any very great degree, I shall relate in a proper place; thinking it much more honourable to have sprung

## ON MYSELF

from an humble origin, and laid a foundation of honour for my descendants, than to have been descended from a noble lineage, and to have disgraced or extinguished it by my own base degeneracy. I shall, therefore, now proceed to inform the reader how it pleased God that I should come into the world.

My ancestors lived in retirement in the valley of Ambra, where they were lords of considerable domains: they were all trained to arms, and distinguished for military prowess. One of the family, a youth named Cristofano, had a fierce dispute with some of their neighbours and friends; and because the chief relations on both sides had engaged in the dispute, and it seemed likely that the flames of discord would end in the destruction of the two families, the eldest people, having maturely considered the matter, unanimously agreed to remove the two young men who began the quarrel out of the way. The opposite party obliged their kinsman to withdraw to Siena, and Cristofano's parents sent him to Florence, where they purchased a small house for him in the Via Chiara, from the monastery of St. Ursula, with a pretty good estate near the bridge of Rifredi. This Cristofano married in Florence, and had several sons and daughters: the daughters were portioned off; and the sons divided the remainder of their father's substance between them. After his decease, the house of Via Chiara, with some other property of no great amount, fell to one of the above mentioned sons, whose name was Andrea. He took a wife, by whom he had four male children: the name of the first was Girolamo, that of the second Bartolomeo; the third was Giovanni, my father; the fourth was Francesco.

Andrea Cellini, my grandfather, was tolerably



## BENVENUTO CELLINI

well versed in the architecture of those days, and made it his profession. Giovanni, my father, cultivated it more than any of his brothers ; and since, according to the opinion of Vitruvius, those who are desirous of succeeding in this art, should, amongst other things, know something of music and drawing, Giovanni, having acquired great proficiency in the art of designing, began to apply himself to music. He learned to play admirably well upon the viol and flute ; and being of a very studious disposition, he hardly ever went abroad.

His next-door neighbour was Stefano Granacci, who had several daughters of extraordinary beauty. Giovanni soon became sensible to the charms of one of them, named Elisabetta ; and at length grew so deeply enamoured that he asked her in marriage. Their fathers being intimate, and next-door neighbours, it was no difficult matter to bring about the match, as both parties thought they found their account in it. First of all, the two old men concluded the marriage, and then began to talk of the portion ; but they could not rightly agree on that point, for Andrea said to Stefano, ‘ My son Giovanni is the best youth in Florence, and even in all Italy ; and if I had thought of procuring him a wife before, I might have obtained for him the best portion in Florence amongst persons of our rank.’ Stefano answered, ‘ You have a thousand reasons on your side, but I have five daughters and several sons ; so that, all things duly considered, it is as much as I can afford.’ Giovanni had stood some time listening to their conversation unperceived by them, but on hearing this he suddenly interrupted them, saying, ‘ Ah ! father, it is the girl that I love and desire, and not her money. Wretched is he who

## ON MYSELF

marries to repair his fortune by means of his wife's dowry. You boast that I am possessed of some talents : is it then to be supposed that I am unable to maintain my wife, and supply her necessities? I want nothing of you but your consent; and I must give you to understand that the girl shall be mine : as to the portion, you may take it yourself.' Andrea Cellini, who was somewhat eccentric, was not a little displeased at this; but in a few days Giovanni took his wife home, and never afterwards required any portion of her father.

They enjoyed their youth and holy love for eighteen years; but had no children, which they ardently desired. At the expiration of the eighteenth year, however, Giovanni's wife miscarried of two male children, through the unskilfulness of her medical attendants. She became pregnant again, and gave birth to a girl, who was called Cosa, after my father's mother. Two years after, she was once more with child, and, as women in her condition are liable to certain longings, hers being exactly the same upon this occasion as before, it was generally thought that she would have another girl, and it had been already agreed to give her the name of Reparata, after my mother's mother. It happened that she was brought to bed precisely the night of All Saints' Day, in the year 1500, at half-an-hour past four. The midwife, who was sensible that the family expected the birth of a girl, as soon as she had washed the child and wrapped it up in fine swaddling-clothes, came softly up to my father, and said to him, 'I here bring you a fine present which you little expected.' My father, who was a true philosopher, and happened to be then walking about, said, 'What God gives me, I

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

shall always receive thankfully'; but, taking off the clothes, he saw with his own eyes the unexpected boy. Clasp<sup>ing</sup> his hands together, he lifted up his eyes to Heaven, saying: 'Lord, I thank Thee from the bottom of my heart for this present, which is very dear and welcome to me.' The standers-by asked him, joyfully, how he proposed to call the child: he made them no other answer than, 'He is WELCOME.' And this name of Welcome (BENVENUTO) he resolved to give me at the font; and so I was christened, and with it I am still living by the grace of God.

Andrea Cellini was still living when I was about three years of age; and he was then above a hundred. As they were one day removing a water-pipe, a large scorpion, which they had not perceived, came out of it; the scorpion descended upon the ground and had got under a great bench, when I, seeing it, ran and caught it in my hand. This scorpion was of such a size, that whilst I held it in my little hand it put out its tail on one side, and on the other darted its two mouths. I ran overjoyed to my grandfather, crying out, 'Grandfather, look at my pretty little crab!' The good old man, who knew it to be a scorpion, was so frightened, and so apprehensive for my safety, that he seemed ready to drop down dead, and begged me with great eagerness to give the creature to him; but I grasped it the harder, and cried, for I did not choose to part with it. My father, who was in the house, ran to us upon hearing the noise; but, stupefied with terror at the sight of that venomous reptile, he could think of no means of rescuing me from my perilous situation. But happening just at that instant to espy a pair of scissors, he laid hold of them, and by caressing and playing with me, he contrived to

## ON MYSELF

cut off the tail and mouths of the scorpion. Then finding I had received no harm, he pronounced it a happy omen.

When I was about five years of age, my father happened to be in a little room in which they had been washing, and where there was a good oak fire burning: with a fiddle in his hand he sang and played near the fire, the weather being exceedingly cold. Looking into the fire, he saw a little animal resembling a lizard, which lived and enjoyed itself in the hottest flames. Instantly perceiving what it was, he called for my sister, and after he had shown us the creature, he gave me a box on the ear: I fell a-crying, while he, soothing me with his caresses, said, 'My dear child, I don't give you that blow for any fault you have committed, but that you may remember that the little lizard which you see in the fire is a salamander; a creature which no one that I have heard of ever beheld before.' So saying, he embraced me, and gave me some money.

My father began to teach me to play upon the flute, and to sing by note; and though I was very young, at an age when children, generally speaking, are highly pleased with piping and such amusements, I had the utmost aversion for it, and played and sang merely in obedience to his authority. My father at that time made the most curious organs with pipes of wood, the finest and best spinets that were to be seen in those days, and most beautiful and excellent viols, lutes, and harps. He was an engineer, and constructed a variety of machines, such as drawbridges, fulling-mills, etc. He worked admirably in ivory, and was the first artist of his time in that line. But when he had fallen in love with her who became my mother—thanks perhaps to that little flute, for he

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

gave more time to it than he should—he was requested by the court-musicians to join with them; and as he was willing to oblige them, they made him one of their band. Lorenzo de' Medici, and Pietro, his son, who were very much his friends, seeing afterwards that he attached himself entirely to music, and neglected his business as an engineer, and his admirable art of working in ivory, removed him from that place. This my father highly resented, and thought himself very ill used by his patrons. He therefore on a sudden applied again to his business, and made a looking-glass, about a cubit diameter, of bone and ivory, adorned with carved figures and foliages, with the finest polish and the most admirable elegance of design. It was in the form of a wheel; the mirror was placed in the middle; round it were seven circles, in which the seven virtues were carved in ivory and black bone; and both the mirror and the figures of the virtues were balanced in such a manner that, the wheel turning round, all the virtues moved at the same time, and had a weight to counterpoise them at their feet, which kept them upright. As he had a smattering of the Latin language, he carved a verse round the mirror, the purport of which was, that on which side soever the wheel of fortune turns, virtue stands unshaken upon her feet.

*Rota sum ; semper, quo quo me verto, stat virtus.*

A short time after, his place of court-musician was restored to him. At that period (which was before I was born) these musicians were all eminent artisans; some of them being manufacturers of wool, and others of silk, belonged to the *Arti Maggiori*: hence my father did not think this profession beneath him; and his first desire with

## ON MYSELF

regard to me was, that I should become a great player on the flute. I, on my part, was never more offended than when he touched upon this subject, and when he told me that, if I had a mind, I might become the best musician in the universe. As I have already observed, my father was a staunch friend to the house of Medici, so that when Pietro was banished from Florence, he entrusted him with many affairs of consequence. The illustrious Pietro Soderini afterwards being elected to the government, when my father was in his service in quality of musician, that great statesman, discovering his extraordinary genius, began to have recourse to him in many matters of importance, and, so long as Soderini remained in Florence, showed him the greatest kindness.

At this time my father, as I was of a tender age, once caused me to be carried upon a person's shoulders to play upon the flute before the senate, and one of their servants supported me all the time. After the music was over, Soderini, then gonfalonier, or chief magistrate, amused himself with my prattle, and giving me sweetmeats, said to my father: 'Giovanni, you must teach him your other two elegant arts, as well as that of music.' My father replied, that he did not intend I should follow any other business but that of playing upon the flute, and composing; for if it pleased God to spare his days, he hoped to make me the first man in the world in that profession. To this one of the old gentlemen present replied: 'Ah, master Cellini, mind what the gonfalonier says; why should the boy aim at nothing higher all his life than being a good musician?'

Thus some time passed till the Medici family was restored. The Cardinal de' Medici, who was afterwards Pope Leo X, immediately upon his

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

recall showed the utmost kindness to my father. While the family was in exile, the balls were removed from the coat of arms in the front of their palace; and the citizens had caused to be painted in their place the figure of a red cross, which was the arms of the republic. But at the sudden return of the Medicean princes the red cross was effaced, and upon the said escutcheon were again painted the red balls, and the golden field was replaced with the most beautiful decorations. My father, who had rather a turn for poetry, with somewhat of a prophetic vein—doubtless, a divine gift,—when the new arms were shown him, wrote the following four lines:—

These arms, so long interr'd from human sight,  
Beneath the image bland of Holy Cross,  
Renew their glorious ensigns' proud emboss,  
And wait but Peter's sacred mantle bright.

This epigram was read throughout the whole of Florence. A few days after died Pope Julius the Second, and the Cardinal de' Medici, afterwards known as the magnanimous and liberal Leo X, having repaired to Rome, was elected Pope, contrary to the general opinion: my father, having sent him the four verses which contained so happy an augury, was invited by him to repair to that capital, which would have been greatly to his advantage, but he did not choose to leave Florence. However, instead of being rewarded, his place at court was taken from him by Jacopo Salviati, as soon as that nobleman was made gonfalonier.

This was the reason of my applying myself to the goldsmith's business; and while I was learning that trade I was compelled to spend part of my time in practising upon the flute, much against

## ON MYSELF

my inclination. For when my father spoke to me in the manner above mentioned, I requested him to let me draw so many hours a day, telling him that I would dedicate the remainder of it to the flute; upon which he said to me, 'Do you not take pleasure in playing on that instrument?' I answered in the negative, saying, the profession of a musician appeared to me base in comparison of that to which I aspired. My poor father then, in the utmost despair, placed me with the father of the cavalier Bandinello, who was called Michelagnolo, goldsmith of Pinzi di Monte, a man of great skill in his art. He was not descended from any illustrious race, but was the son of a collier. This I do not mention as a reflection on Bandinello, who, as the founder of a distinguished family, is entitled to respect, provided his success was merited; and however that may be, I have nothing to say against him. When I had stayed there a few days, my father took me away from Michelagnolo, as being unable to bear me any longer out of his sight; so that I continued, much against my will, to play upon the flute till the age of fifteen. If I should attempt to relate the extraordinary events that befell me till that period, and the great danger to which my life was exposed, I should strike my readers with surprise and astonishment; but to avoid prolixity, having more interesting matter, I shall wholly omit them.

Having attained the age of fifteen, I engaged myself, against my father's inclination, with a goldsmith, named Antonio di Sandro, who was commonly called Marcone. This was an excellent artist, and a very worthy man, high-spirited, and generous in every respect. My father would not have him allow me any wages, as was customary with other workmen; for this reason, that, since



## BENVENUTO CELLINI

I voluntarily applied myself to this art, I might likewise have an opportunity to draw whenever I thought proper. To this arrangement I readily acceded, and my worthy master was much pleased with the bargain. He had an only, but illegitimate, son, to whom he often directed his orders, on purpose to spare me. So great was my inclination to improve, that in a few months I rivalled the most skilful journeyman in the business, and began to reap some fruits from my labour. I continued, however, to play sometimes, through complaisance to my father, either upon the flute or the horn; and I constantly drew tears and deep sighs from him every time he heard me. From a feeling of filial piety, I often gave him that satisfaction, endeavouring to persuade him that it gave me also particular pleasure.

At this juncture an adventure happened to my brother, which was attended with very serious consequences to us both. He was two years younger than myself, of a warm temper and the most undaunted courage, qualities which fitted him for the military school of the illustrious Signor Giovaunino de' Medici, father to Duke Cosimo, where he became an excellent soldier. This youth was about fourteen, and I two years older. One Sunday evening, being between the gates of St. Gallo and Pinti, he challenged a young man of twenty, and behaved so gallantly, that, after wounding the youth dangerously, he was upon the point of either killing or disarming him. There was a great crowd present, and amongst others were many of the young man's relations: seeing their kinsman hard pressed, they took up stones and threw them at my brother's head, who immediately fell to the ground. I, who happened to be present, alone and unarmed, cried out to my brother, as

## ON MYSELF

loud as I could, to quit the place. But as soon as I saw him fall, I ran to him, took his sword, and standing as near him as possible, I confronted a great many swords and stones, till some valiant soldiers, who came from the gate of St. Gallo, saved me from the exasperated multitude. I carried my brother home for dead, who was with great difficulty brought to himself, and afterwards cured.

The Council of Eight condemned our adversaries to a few years' imprisonment, and banished me and my brother, for six months, to the distance of ten miles from the city. I said to my brother, 'Come with me,' and so we took leave of our poor father, who, having no money, gave us his blessing.

I repaired to Siena, in quest of an honest goldsmith, whose name was Francesco Castoro. I was well acquainted with him, as I had worked with him sometime before at my trade, when I had run away, for some frivolous reason, from my father. Signor Castoro received me very kindly, and found me employ, offering me a house for the whole time I should reside at Siena. I accepted his offer, and brought my brother to the house, where I followed my business for several months with close application. My brother, too, had made some progress in Latin literature, but, being young, he was not equally capable of appreciating the excellence of moral beauty, and led rather a dissipated life.

Soon after this troublesome affair the Cardinal de' Medici, afterwards Pope Clement VII, was prevailed upon, by the entreaties of my father, to obtain permission for us to return to Florence. A pupil of my father's, excited by the natural malignity of his temper, desired the cardinal to

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

send me to Bologna, in order to take lessons on the flute of a great master, whose name was Antonio. The cardinal told my father that if he would send me thither he would give me a letter of recommendation: the old gentleman was extremely desirous that I should go, and I was glad of that opportunity of seeing the world.

Upon my arrival at Bologna, I undertook to work under a person whose name was Ercole del Piffero, and I began to make money. At this same time, I went every day to receive a lesson on the flute, and soon gained a considerable emolument by that odious profession; but I got much more by my trade as a goldsmith and jeweller. Having received no assistance from the cardinal, I went to lodge with a miniature-painter, named Scipio Cavalletti, who lived in the street of Our Lady of Baracani, and there I worked for a person named Grazia Dio, a Jew, with whom I earned a great deal of money.

Six months afterwards I returned to Florence, where Pierino the musician, who had been a pupil to my father, was greatly mortified at my success; but I, through complaisance of my aged parent, waited upon Pierino, and played both upon the horn and flute with a brother of his, whose name was Girolamo. He was some years younger than Pierino, and was moreover a well-disposed young man, displaying a marked contrast to his brother. My father happening one day to be at the house of this Pierino to hear us play, and being highly pleased with my performance, said: 'I am determined to make a great musician of him, in spite of those who would fain prevent such a genius from shining in the world.' To this Pierino answered (and what he said was very true), 'Your son Benvenuto will acquire more

## ON MYSELF

profit, as well as honour, by minding his business as a goldsmith, than by blowing the horn, or any other instrument.' My father, finding I was of the same opinion, was incensed to the last degree; he therefore said to him in a violent passion: 'I was very sensible that you were the person who thwarted me in my design; and it was you that were the cause of my being deprived of the place I held at court, behaving to me with that base ingratitude, which is but too frequently the return for the greatest favours. I got you promoted, and you were so base as to undermine me; but mark these words: in less than a few weeks you will rue this black ingratitude.' Pierino replied: 'Signor Giovanni Cellini, most men when they advance in years begin to dote: this is your case; nor am I surprised at it, as you have already lavished all your substance, without reflecting that your children were likely to want. Now I, for my part, propose taking quite a different course: I intend to leave so much to my sons, that they shall be able to assist yours.' To this my father replied, 'No bad tree ever brings forth good fruit, but the reverse; and I must tell you, that if you be a bad man, your sons will be fools and indigent, and come to beg of my children, who shall be crowned with affluence.'\* At this they parted, murmuring and railing at each other.

I, who, as was reasonable, took my worthy father's part, said to him at quitting the house, that I intended to revenge the affront he had received from that scoundrel, if he would give me leave to dedicate my talents to the art of design. My father made answer: 'Dear child, I have been myself, in my time, a master of that art; but will you not, in your turn, promise me, by way of recreation, after your noble labours are done, and

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

for my sake, who am your father, who have begot you, educated you, and laid the foundation of so many shining qualifications, sometimes to take in hand your flute and cheerful horn, and play for your pastime and amusement?' I made answer, that I would readily comply with his desire. My good father then rejoined, that the virtues which I displayed to the world would be the best revenge I could take for the affronts and abusive language he had received from his enemies.

Before the month was expired, it happened that the above mentioned Pierino, causing a vault to be made to a house he had in the Via dello Studio, and being one day in a room on the ground-floor over the vault, which was then repairing, entered into conversation with some company, and spoke of his master, who was no other than my father, repeating the prophetic words which the latter had uttered, concerning his approaching ruin. Scarcely had he ended his discourse, when the chamber in which he then stood suddenly sunk in, either because the vault had been unskilfully constructed, or through an effect of the divine vengeance, which, though late, is only deferred to a fitter season. Some of the stones and bricks falling with him broke both his legs, whilst the rest of the company, standing upon the extremities of the vault, received no manner of hurt, but remained in the utmost surprise and astonishment at what they saw; and most of all at what he had said to them a little before in a scoffing mood. My father, having heard of this accident, took his sword, and went to see him; and, in the presence of his father, whose name was Niccolajo da Volterra, trumpeter to the senate, addressed him in these words:

## ON MYSELF

‘ My dear pupil Pierino, I am very sorry for your misfortune; but you may remember that it is but a short time since I apprised you of it; and my prophecy will likewise be verified with regard to our children.’

Soon after, the ungrateful Pierino died of the consequences of his fall, and left behind him a wife of bad character, and a son, who, a few years after, came to me at Rome, asking charity. I gave him alms, as well because I am naturally of a charitable disposition, as because I could not without tears recollect the affluence with which Pierino was surrounded, when my father spoke the words above mentioned, namely, that the sons of the said Pierino should some day come to beg from his virtuous sons. Let this be enough to say, and let no one make mock of the prognostications of an honest man, when he is unjustly abused, because it is not he that speaks but the voice of God Himself.

Continuing to apply closely to my business as a goldsmith, by the emoluments arising from thence, I assisted my good father, as well as my brother, Cecchino, whom he caused to be instructed in Latin literature; for, as he intended I should be the best player upon the flute in the world, it was his design that my younger brother should be a man of learning, and a profound lawyer. He was not, however, able to force nature, which gave me a turn to drawing, and made my brother, who had a fine person, entirely devote himself to the military profession. This brother of mine, having in his early youth learned the first rudiments of war under that renowned commander Giovannino de’ Medici, returned to my father’s house, at a time when I happened to be out of the way. Being very much in want of clothes, he applied

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

to my sister, who, unknown to my father, gave him a new surtout and cloak which belonged to me; for, besides assisting my father, and my sisters, who were virtuous and deserving girls, I had, by the profits arising from my extraordinary application, contrived to purchase this handsome apparel. Finding my clothes gone, and my brother disappeared, I said to my father: 'How could you suffer me to be wronged in such a manner, when you see I spare no toil nor trouble to assist him?' He made answer, 'That I was his good and worthy son, but that what I thought a loss, I should find to be true gain'; adding 'that it was a duty incumbent on us, and the command of God Himself, that he who had property should share it with him who had none; and that, if I would for his sake patiently bear the wrong I had suffered, God would increase my store, and pour down blessings upon me.'

I behaved to my poor afflicted father like an inexperienced young man; and, taking with me what little money and clothes I had left, I bent my course towards one of the city gates, and, not knowing which of them led to Rome, I travelled to Lucca, and from thence to Pisa. I was now about sixteen years of age. Upon my arrival in the last-mentioned city, I stopped near the middle bridge, hard by the 'Fish Stone,' at a goldsmith's shop, and looked attentively at the master whilst he was at work. He asked me my name, and what business I followed: I made answer, that I worked a little in the same branch that he did. The man thereupon bade me come in, and setting before me some tools to work with, he told me that my good looks induced him to believe that I was an honest youth; so saying, he laid before me gold, silver, and jewels, and, after I had

## ON MYSELF

finished my first day's task, he carried me to his house, where he lived very respectably with his wife and children.

I then called to mind the grief which my father must feel upon my account, and wrote him word that I was at the house of a very worthy tradesman, one Signor Ulivieri della Chiostra; and that, under him, I was employed in my profession on many great and beautiful works. I therefore desired him to make himself easy, as I was improving in my business, and hoped soon to procure him both profit and honour by my skill. He immediately wrote me an answer, the purport of which was as follows: 'My dear son, so great is the love I bear to you, that I should instantly set out for the place where you now reside, were it not that the laws of honour, which I always adhere to, prevent me; for I think myself deprived of the light of my eyes every day that I am without seeing you, as I did formerly, when I gave you the best instructions. I shall keep it in view to incite my family to virtuous enterprise, and pray lead the way in the attainment of good qualities, for which all I wish is that you would keep in mind those few simple words;—observe, and never once allow them to escape your memory:—

The man who consults his house's weal,  
Lives honest—and lives to work—not steal.'

This letter fell into the hands of my master Ulivieri, who read it to himself, and then said to me: 'Thy good looks, Benvenuto, did not deceive me, as I find by a letter from thy father, which has fallen into my hands. He must, doubtless, be a man of worth, therefore consider thyself as in thine own house, and under the care of thy father.'

Whilst I stayed at Pisa I went to see the Campo



## BENVENUTO CELLINI

Santo, where I discovered a great number of antiquities, such as large marble urns; and, in many parts of the town, I saw other monuments of antiquity, which afforded me constant amusement, whenever I was disengaged from the business of the shop. As my master came daily, with great good nature, to see me at the little apartment which he had assigned to my use, when he found that I spent all my time in laudable and virtuous occupations, he conceived as strong an affection for me as if he had been my father. I improved considerably, during a year's stay in that city, and executed several fine pieces of workmanship, which inspired me with an ardent desire to become more eminent in my profession. My father, at this juncture, wrote to me very affectionately to come home, and, in every letter, exhorted me not to neglect my flute, in which he had taken so much pains to instruct me. Upon this I entirely lost all inclination to return to him; and to such a degree did I hate that abominable flute, that I thought myself in a sort of paradise during my stay at Pisa, where I never once played upon that instrument.

At the expiration of the year, Signor Ulivieri happened to have occasion to go to Florence, to dispose of some filings of gold and silver; and, as I had in that unwholesome air caught a slight fever, I returned, whilst it was upon me, with my master to Florence; where my father secretly entreated my master, in the most urgent manner, not to carry me back again to Pisa. My fever still continuing, I kept my bed about two months, and my father attended me with the greatest affection imaginable; telling me repeatedly that he thought it a thousand years till I recovered, that he might hear me play upon the flute; but

## ON MYSELF

feeling my pulse, as he had a smattering of physic and some learning, he perceived so great a change in it whenever he mentioned the flute, that he was often frightened, and left me in tears. Observing then the great concern he was in, I bade one of my sisters bring me a flute; for, though I had a fever constantly upon me, the instrument was a very easy one, and would do me no hurt. I thereupon played with such skill and dexterity, that my father, entering the room on a sudden, gave me a thousand blessings, assuring me that, during my absence from him, I had made great improvement. He requested, moreover, that I would endeavour to continue my progress, and not neglect so admirable a qualification.

But no sooner had I recovered my health, than I returned to my worthy friend, the goldsmith Marcone, who put me in a way of making money; and with my gains I assisted my father and my family.

About this time there came to Florence a sculptor named Pietro Torrigiani, who had just arrived from England, where he had resided several years; and as he was an intimate friend of my master's, he every day came to see him. This artist, having seen my drawings and workmanship, said to me: 'I am come to Florence to invite as many young artists as I can to England, and, having a great work in hand for the King of England, I should be glad of the assistance of my fellow-citizens of Florence. I perceive that your manner of working and your designs are rather those of a sculptor than a goldsmith; now I have considerable undertakings in bronze, so that, if you will go with me to England, I will at once make your fortune.' This Torrigiani was a handsome man, of consummate assurance,

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

having rather the air of a bravo than of a sculptor ; above all, his fierce gestures and his sonorous voice, with a peculiar manner of knitting his brows, were enough to frighten every one that saw him ; and he was continually talking of his valiant feats among those bears of Englishmen. His conversation one day happened to turn upon Michael Angelo Buonarroti ; a drawing of mine, taken from one of the cartoons of that divine artist, gave rise to this discourse.

This cartoon was the first in which Michael Angelo displayed his extraordinary abilities, and he made it in competition with one made by another artist, Leonardo da Vinci, to adorn the hall of the palace where the senators assembled ; they represented the taking of Pisa by the Florentines. The admirable Leonardo had chosen for his subject a battle fought by cavalry, with the taking of certain standards, as divinely done as it could be imagined. Michael Angelo Buonarroti in his cartoon exhibited a considerable body of infantry, who were bathing in summer-time in the river Arno ; at this very instant he represents an alarm of battle, and all the naked soldiers rushing to arms, with gestures so admirably expressive, that no ancient or modern performance was ever known to attain so high a degree of perfection : and, as I have already observed, that of the great Leonardo was also a work of extraordinary beauty. These two cartoons stood, one of them in the palace of the Medici, the other in the Pope's hall. So long as they remained there, they were the school of the world ; and though the divine Michael Angelo painted the great chapel of Pope Julius, he never again rose to that pitch of excellence : his genius could not reach the force of those first essays.

## ON MYSELF

Let us now return to Pietro Torrigiani ; who, holding the above mentioned drawing of mine in his hand, spoke thus : ‘ This Buonarroti and I went, when we were boys, to learn to draw at the chapel of Masaccio, in the church of the Carmelites ; and it was customary with Buonarroti to rally all those who were learning to draw there. One day, a sarcasm of his having stung me to the quick, I was provoked to an uncommon degree, and gave him so violent a blow upon the nose with my fist, that I felt the bone and cartilage yield under my hand as if they had been made of paste, and the mark I then gave him he will carry to his grave.’ This speech raised in me such an aversion to the fellow, because I had seen the works of the divine Michael Angelo, that, far from having any inclination to go with him to England, I could never more bear the sight of him.

Whilst I was in Florence I did my utmost to learn the exquisite manner of Michael Angelo, and have never since lost sight of it. About this time I contracted an intimate acquaintance and friendship with a youth of my own age, who, like me, was learning the goldsmith’s business : his name was Francesco, son of Filippo, whose father was Frà Filippo, an excellent painter. Our intercourse gave rise to so great an affection between us, that we were never asunder ; his house was full of the admirable performances of his father, which consisted of several books of drawings by his own hand representing the antiquities of Rome. I took great delight in these, and our acquaintance lasted about two years. At this time I procured a piece of basso-rilievo in silver, about as big as the hand of a little child ; it served for the clasp of a man’s belt ; clasps of that size being then in use. Upon it was carved a group of foliages, made

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

in the antique taste, with several figures of youths and other beautiful grotesques. This piece of work I made in the shop of a person named Francesco Salimbene; and, upon its coming under the inspection of the goldsmiths' company, I acquired the reputation of the most expert young man in the trade.

At this time I was also acquainted with one Giovanni Battista, surnamed Tasso, who was a carver in wood, a youth of my own age exactly. He one day began to talk to me about going to Rome, observing that he should like to accompany me thither (this occurred as we sat conversing after dinner), and I having had a new difference with my father about learning the flute, said to Tasso: 'You appear to be a man of words and not of deeds.' Tasso answered: 'I too have had a dispute with my mother, and, if I had but money sufficient to bear my charges to Rome, I would never more trouble my head about my little hole of a shop.' To this I replied, that if there was no other obstruction to our journey, I had money enough in my pocket to defray our expenses. Then chatting as we walked along, before we knew whereabouts we were, we came to the gate of San Pier Gattolini; when I said to my companion: 'My good friend Tasso, it is the will of God that we should have insensibly reached this gate; since I have proceeded so far, I think I have performed half the journey.'

Matters being thus agreed, we said to each other, as we were jogging on: 'What will the old folks at home say this evening?' We then came to a resolution to think no more of them, till we arrived at Rome: so we tied our aprons behind our backs, and proceeded almost in silence to Siena. When we reached that city, Tasso said that he

## ON MYSELF

had hurt his feet, and did not choose to walk any farther, at the same time asking me to lend him money to return home. I answered that I should have none left to bear my expenses to Rome, and that he should have well weighed his project before he left Florence; adding, that if the hurt he received prevented his accompanying me, we should find a return-horse for Rome, and then he would have no excuse. Thus, having hired a horse, as I saw he did not answer me, I bent my course towards the gate that led to Rome. Perceiving that I was resolved, he came hopping after me as well as he could, at a distance, grumbling and muttering all the time. When I reached the gate I was touched with compassion for my companion, and having waited for his coming, took him up behind me, using these words: 'What would our friends say of us, if, after having commenced a journey to Rome, we had not the courage to push any farther than Siena?' My friend Tasso acknowledged that my observation was just, and, as he was a person of a cheerful disposition, he began to laugh and sing, and in this merry mood we pursued our journey to Rome. I was then just nineteen years old, and so was the century.

As soon as we got to that capital, I went to work with a master whose name was Firenzuola of Lombardy, an excellent artist in making vases, and other things of a considerable size. Having shown him part of the model which I had made at Florence with Salimbene, he was highly pleased with it, and spoke thus to a journeyman of his, named Giannotto Giannotti, a native of Florence, who had lived with him several years: 'This is one of the geniuses of Florence, and thou art one of its dunces.' As I knew this Giannotto,

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

I had a mind to have some chat with him. Before he set out for Rome, we often practised drawing in the same school, and had been for several years intimate acquaintances. He was, however, so much nettled at his master's speech, that he declared he was not acquainted with me, nor had ever seen me before. Wherefore I, indignant at such words, said to him: 'Oh, Giannotto! formerly my intimate friend, when we were employed together in drawing, and when we ate and drank in such and such apartments of our native town, I do not desire that you should bear testimony of my abilities to your master, for I hope, by my own hands, to show what I am, without your assistance.' When I had done speaking, Firenzuola, who was a passionate man, turned to Giannotto, and said: 'You vile scoundrel, are you not ashamed to behave in such a manner to one that was formerly your intimate acquaintance?' At the same time he addressed himself to me: 'Come in, young man,' said he, 'and do as you proposed; let your own hands prove your abilities.'

So saying, he set me upon a fine piece of work in silver, which was intended for a cardinal. This was a small casket, in imitation of that of porphyry, which stands before the door of the Rotunda. That which I made, I adorned with so many fine figures, that my master went about showing it everywhere, and making it his boast that his shop had produced so admirable a piece of art. It was about half a cubit in circumference, and made in such a manner as to hold a salt-cellar at table. This was the first time I earned money at Rome: part of it I sent to the relief of my good father, and the remainder I kept to support me whilst I studied the antiq-

## ON MYSELF

unities of that city, which I did till my money began to fail, and then I was obliged to return to the shop, and work for my subsistence. My fellow-traveller, Battista del Tasso, made but a short stay at Rome, and returned to Florence. For my part I undertook new commissions, and when I had finished them, I took it into my head to change my master, being enticed away by a Milanese, whose name was Signor Pagolo Arsago.

My first master Firenzuola had thereupon great quarrel with this Arsago, and gave him some abusive language in my presence. I began to speak in defence of my new master; and told Firenzuola that 'I was born free, and resolved to continue so; that he had no cause of complaint either against Arsago or me; that I had still some money left to receive from him and that, as I was a free artificer, I would go wherever I thought proper, not being conscious of injuring anybody thereby.' At the same time Arsago made a great many apologies, affirming that he had never persuaded me to leave my master, and that I should oblige him by returning to Firenzuola. I replied, that, 'as I was not conscious of having wronged my master in any respect, and as I had finished all the work I had undertaken, I was resolved to be at my own disposal, and that he who had a mind to employ me, had nobody to consult but myself.' Firenzuola made answer: 'I will no longer solicit you, or give myself any trouble about you; and I desire you never more to appear in my presence.' I then put him in my mind of my money, but he only answered by scoffing and derision. I told him that as I used my tools well, as he was sensible I did, in my trade, I knew equally well how to use my sword in



## BENVENUTO CELLINI

recovering my right. As I uttered these words an old signor named Antonio da San Marino came up; he was one of the best goldsmiths in Rome, and had been Firenzuola's master; hearing what I had to say for myself, he immediately took my part, and desired Firenzuola to pay me. The dispute was very warm, for Firenzuola was a still better swordsman than a jeweller; however, justice and reason are not easily baffled, and I exerted myself to such purpose, that my demand was satisfied. Sometime after, Firenzuola and I were reconciled, and I stood godfather to a child of his, at his own request. Continuing to work with my new master, Pagolo Arsago, I earned a great deal of money, and constantly sent the best part of my gains to my father.

At the expiration of two years, I returned to Florence at the request of my good father, and began to work again under Francesco Salimbene, with whom I gained a genteel subsistence, taking great pains to become perfect in my profession. Having renewed my acquaintance with Francesco di Filippo, though that odious flute drew me into some pleasurable dissipation, I contrived to dedicate some hours, both of the night and the day, to my studies. About this time I made a silver clasp girdle, such as were usually worn at that time by new-married ladies. It was three inches broad, and worked in half-relief, with some small round figures in it; this I made for a person of the name of Raffaello Lapaccini. Though I was very ill-paid for my trouble, the work did me so much honour, that the reputation I acquired by it was of more service to me than a fair pecuniary recompense.

Having at this time worked with several

## ON MYSELF

masters in Florence, amongst the different goldsmiths I knew in that city, I met with some persons of worth, as was Marcone, my first master; whilst others, who had the character of honest men, being envious of my works, and robbing and calumniating me, did me the greatest injustice. When I perceived this, I shook off my connections with them, and looked upon them all as unprincipled men, and little better than thieves. A goldsmith, amongst the rest, named Giovanni Battista Sogliani, was so complaisant as to lend me part of his shop, which stood at the side of the new market, hard by Landi's bank. There I executed many little works, earned a great deal of money, and was enabled to assist my relations materially. Envy began then to rankle in the hearts of my former bad masters, whose names were Salvatore and Michele Guasconti; they all three kept shops, and had immense business. Seeing that they did me ill offices with some men of worth, I complained of it, and said they ought to be satisfied with having robbed me, as they had done, under the mask of benevolence. This coming to their ears, they declared loudly that they would make me repent having uttered such words; but I, being a stranger to fear, little regarded their menaces.

As I happened one day to lean against the shop of one of these men, he called me to him, and in the most abusive language bullied and threatened me. Upon which I said, that if they had done their duty with respect to me, I should have spoken of them as persons of fair character; but, as they had behaved in a different manner, they had only themselves to complain of. Whilst I spoke thus, one Gherardo Guasconti, a cousin of theirs, who was in all probability set on

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

by them, took the opportunity, as a beast loaded with bricks happened to pass by, to push it so violently against me, that I was very much hurt. Upon which I instantly turned about, and seeing him laugh, gave him so violent a blow on the temple that he fell down, and lay upon the ground motionless and insensible. Then turning to his cousins, I said to them: 'That is the way I use cowardly rascals like you'; and as they, confiding in their number, seemed preparing to take their revenge, I, in a violent passion, drew a little knife, and vented my anger in these words: 'If any one of you offers to quit the shop, let another run for a confessor, as there will be no occasion for a surgeon.' This declaration struck such terror into them all, that not one of them ventured to stir to the assistance of his cousin.

No sooner had I left the place, but both the fathers and sons ran to the magistrates, and told them that I had violently assaulted them with arms, in so audacious a manner, that the like had never been known in Florence. The Council of Eight summoned me, and I, without delay, presented myself before them. Here I met with a severe reprimand, as well in consequence of my wearing a cloak, while the others wore their citizens' mantle and hood, as because these adversaries had taken care to prepossess these signors in their favour, a precaution which I, being inexperienced, and trusting to the goodness of my cause, had neglected. I told them, that 'as I had received such provocation from Gherardo, and had only given him a slap on the face, I did not think I deserved so severe a rebuke.' Prinzivalle della Stufa, who was one of that court, hardly suffering me to make an end of the words 'slap on the face,' exclaimed:

## ON MYSELF

‘ You gave him a violent blow with your fist, and not a slap.’ The bell having rung, and we being all dismissed, Prinzivalle thus spoke in my favour to the rest of the bench : ‘ Observe, gentlemen, the simplicity of this poor youth, who acknowledges himself to have given a slap on the face, thinking it to be a less offence than a violent blow ; whereas there is a penalty of five-and-twenty crowns for giving a person a slap on the face, in the new market ; while the penalty for a blow with the fist is little or nothing. This is a very worthy young man, who supports his poor relations by his industry : would to God that there were many like him in our city, which can, indeed, boast but a very small number of virtuous citizens.’

There were in the court some persons in twisted-up hoods, who, moved by the importunities and misrepresentations of my adversaries, because they were of the faction of Frà Girolamo, were for having me sent to prison, and heavily fined ; but the good Prinzivalle defeated their malice, by getting me fined only in four bushels of meal, which were to be given in charity to the nunnery *delle Murate*. This same judge, having called me into his presence, commanded me not to say a single word, but obey the orders of the court, upon pain of incurring their displeasure. They sent us then to the chancellor, and I muttered the words ‘ slap, and not a blow, on the face ’ ; the magistrates burst out a-laughing. The chancellor commanded us all to give security to each other for our good behaviour, and sentenced me only to pay the four measures of meal. I thought myself very hardly used, and having sent for a cousin of mine, whose name was Annibale Libro-doro, father to Signor Libro-doro, the surgeon,

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

that he might be bail for me, he refused to appear. This incensed me to the highest degree, believing my case desperate, and I exclaimed loudly at his behaviour, as he was under great obligations to my family. Here it may be observed how a man's stars not only incline, but actually compel him to do their behest.

Inflamed by this treatment, swelling like an enraged asp, and being naturally of a very passionate temper, I waited till the court broke up, and the magistrates were gone to dinner. Finding myself then alone, and that I was no longer observed by any of the officers of the court, I left the place in a violent fury, and went in all haste to my workshop, where I took up a dagger, and ran to attack my adversaries, who by that time were come home. I found them at table, and young Gherardo, who had been the chief cause of the quarrel, immediately flew at me. I thereupon gave him a stab in the breast, which pierced through his cloak and doublet, without once reaching his skin, or doing him any sort of harm. Imagining, however, from the rustling of his clothes, upon my giving the stab, and from his falling flat upon the ground, through fright and astonishment, that I had done him some great hurt, I cried out: 'Traitors, this day I shall be revenged on you all.' The father, mother, and sisters, thinking that the day of judgment was come, fell prostrate upon their knees, and, with voices full of terror and consternation, called for mercy. Seeing then that none of my adversaries stood upon the defensive, and that Gherardo lay stretched out upon the ground like a dead corpse, I scorned to meddle with them, but ran downstairs like a madman. When I got into the street I found the rest of the family, who were

## ON MYSELF

about a dozen in number, ready to attack me. One of them held an iron shovel, another a thick iron tube, another a hammer taken from an anvil, and others again had cudgels in their hands. Rushing amongst them like a mad bull, I threw down four or five and fell to the ground along with them, now aiming my dagger at one, now at another. Those who continued standing exerted themselves to the utmost, belabouring me with their hammers and cudgels; but, as God sometimes mercifully interposes upon such occasions, it so happened that I neither received nor did any harm. I lost nothing but my cap, which fell into the hands of some of my adversaries who at first had fled: being assured it was only my cap, each of them struck it with his weapon; but, upon looking about for the wounded and slain, it appeared that none of them had sustained any injury.

The scuffle being over, I bent my course towards the convent of Santa Maria Novella, and accidentally met with a friar named Alessio Strozzi. Though I was not acquainted with the good friar, I entreated him to save my life, saying, I had been guilty of a serious offence. The friar desired me not to be under any apprehensions, for that whatever crimes I might have committed I should be in perfect security in his cell. In about an hour's time, the magistrates having assembled in an extraordinary meeting, published one of the most tremendous edicts that ever was heard of, threatening the severest penalties to whosoever should grant me an asylum, or be privy to my concealment, without any distinction of place or quality of the person who harboured me.

My poor afflicted father, appearing before the eight judges, fell prostrate upon the ground, and

## BENVENUTO CELLINI

begged them to show compassion on his young and unfortunate son. Thereupon one of those incensed magistrates, shaking the top of his twisted-up hood, stood up, and thus angrily expressed himself: 'Rise directly, and quit this spot, or, to-morrow morning, we shall send you from the town under a guard!' My father, in answer to these menaces, said: 'You will do what God permits you, and nothing more.' The magistrate replied that nothing could be more certain than that God had thus ordered matters. My father then said boldly to him: 'My comfort is that you have no certain knowledge of what shall be.'

Having thus quitted the court, he came to me with a youth about my age, whose name was Piero, son of Giovanni Landi (we were dearer to each other than brothers): this young man had under his mantle an excellent sword and a coat of mail. My father having acquainted me with the situation of affairs, and what the magistrates had said, embraced me most tenderly, and gave me his blessing, saying, 'May the protection of God be with you!' Then presenting me with the sword, and the coat of mail, he, with his own hands, helped to accoutre me, concluding with these words, 'My worthy son, with these arms you must either live or die.' Pier Landi, who was present, wept without ceasing, and brought me ten crowns of gold. I desired him to pull off a few hairs from my cheeks, which were the first down that overspread them. Brother Alessio dressed me in the habit of a friar, and gave me a lay brother for a companion

I came out of the convent by the Prato gate, and walked by the side of the town walls, as far as the great square, ascending the steep of Montui.

## ON MYSELF

where I found, in one of the first houses, a person of the name of Grassuccio, own brother to Benedetto da Monte Varchi. After I had laid aside my friar's disguise, and resumed my former appearance, we mounted two horses, which there stood ready for us, and galloped away in the night to Siena.

Grassuccio, upon his return to Florence, waited on my father, and informed him of my having reached a place of safety. My father, highly rejoiced at these tidings, was impatient to see the magistrate who, the day before, had rebuked him with such severity. As soon as he came into his presence, he said: 'You see at last, Antonio, it was God, not you, who knew what was to befall my son.' To which the other answered: 'I wish I could see him once more before this court.' My father replied: 'I shall spend my time in thanking God that He has rescued him out of your hands.'



## SAMUEL PEPYS

### CORONATION DAY

23d. About four I rose and got to the Abbey, where I followed Sir J. Denham, the surveyor, with some company he was leading in. And with much ado, by the favour of Mr. Cooper, his man, did get up into a great scaffold across the North end of the Abbey, where with a great deal of patience I sat from past four till eleven before the king came in. And a great pleasure it was to see the Abbey raised in the middle, all covered with red, and a throne (that is, a chair) and footstool on the top of it; and all the officers of all kinds, so much as the very fiddlers, in red vests. At last comes in the Dean and Prebendaries of Westminster, with the Bishops (many of them in cloth of gold copes), and after them the Nobility, all in their Parliament robes, which was a most magnificent sight. Then the Duke and the King with a sceptre (carried by my Lord Sandwich) and sword and wand before him, and the crown too. The King in his robes, bare-headed, which was very fine. And after all had placed themselves, there was a sermon and the service; and then in the choir at the high altar, the King passed through all the ceremonies of the Coronation, which to my great grief I and most in the Abbey could not see. The crown being put upon his head, a great shout began, and he came forth to the throne, and there passed through more ceremonies: as taking the oath, and having things read to him by the Bishop; and his lords (who

## ON MYSELF

put on their caps as soon as the King put on his crown) and bishops came, and kneeled before him. And three times the King-at-Arms went to the three open places on the scaffold, and proclaimed, that if any one could show any reason why Charles Stuart should not be King of England, that now he should come and speak. And a General Pardon also was read by the Lord Chancellor, and medals flung up and down by my Lord Cornwallis, of silver, but I could not come by any. But so great a noise that I could make but little of the music; and, indeed, it was lost to everybody. I went out a little while before the King had done all his ceremonies, and went round the Abbey to Westminster Hall, all the way within rails, and 10,000 people with the ground covered with blue cloth; and scaffolds all the way. Into the Hall I got, where it was very fine with hangings and scaffolds one upon another, full of brave ladies; and my wife in one little one, on the right hand. Here I stayed walking up and down, and at last upon one of the side stalls I stood and saw the King come in with all the persons (but the soldiers) that were yesterday in the cavalcade; and a most pleasant sight it was to see them in their several robes. And the King came in with his crown on, and his sceptre in his hand, under a canopy borne up by six silver staves, carried by Barons of the Cinque Ports, and little bells at every end. And after a long time, he got up to the farther end, and all set themselves down at their several tables; and that was also a brave sight: and the King's first course carried up by the Knights of the Bath. And many fine ceremonies there was of the Heralds leading up people before him and bowing; and my Lord of Albemarle's going to the kitchen and

## SAMUEL PEPYS

eating a bit of the first dish that was to go to the King's table. But, above all, was these three Lords, Northumberland, and Suffolk, and the Duke of Ormond, coming before the courses on horseback, and staying so all dinner-time, and at last bringing up [ Dymock ], the King's champion, all in armour on horseback, with his spear and target carried before him. And a Herald proclaims "That if any dare deny Charles Stuart to be lawful King of England, here was a Champion that would fight with him;" and with these words, the Champion flings down his gauntlet, and all this he do three times in his going up towards the King's table. To which, when he is come, the King drinks to him, and then sends him the cup which is of gold, and he drinks it off, and then rides back again with the cup in his hand. I went from table to table to see the Bishops and all others at their dinners, and was infinitely pleased with it. And at the Lord's table I met with William Howe, and he spoke to my Lord for me, and he did give him four rabbits and a pullet, and so Mr. Creed and I got Mr. Minshell to give us some bread, and so we at a stall eat it, as everybody else did what they could get. I took a great deal of pleasure to go up and down, and look upon the ladies and to hear the music of all sorts, but above all the 24 violins. About six at night they had dined, and I went up to my wife. And strange it is to think, that these two days have held up fair till now that all is done, and the King gone out of the Hall and then it fell a-raining and thundering and lightening as I have not seen it do for some years: which people did take great notice of; God's blessing of the work of these two days, which is a foolery to take too much notice of such things. I observed little

## ON MYSELF

disorder in all this, only the King's footmen had got hold of the canopy, and would keep it from the Barons of the Cinque Ports, which they endeavoured to force from them again, but could not do it till my Lord Duke of Albemarle caused it to be put into Sir R. Pye's hand till to-morrow to be decided. At Mr. Bowyer's; a great deal of company, some I knew, others I did not. Here we stayed upon the leads and below till it was late, expecting to see the fire-works, but they were not performed to-night: only the City had a light like a glory round about it, with bonfires. At last I went to King Street, and there sent Crockford to my father's and my house, to tell them I could not come home to-night, because of the dirt, and a coach could not be had. And so I took my wife and Mrs. Frankleyn (who I proffered the civility of lying with my wife, at Mrs. Hunt's to-night) to Axe-yard, in which, at the further end, there were three great bonfires, and a great many gallants, men and women; and they laid hold of us, and would have us drink the King's health upon our knees, kneeling upon a faggot, which we all did, they drinking to us one after another, which we thought a strange frolic; but these gallants continued there a great while, and I wondered to see how the ladies did tipple. At last, I sent my wife and her bedfellow to bed, and Mr. Hunt and I went in with Mr. Thornbury (who did give the company all their wine, he being yeoman of the wine-cellar to the King); and there, with his wife and two of his sisters, and some gallant sparks that were there, we drank the King's health, and nothing else, till one of the gentlemen fell down stark drunk, and there lay; and I went to my Lord's pretty well. But no sooner a-bed with Mr. Shepley

## SAMUEL PEPYS

but my head began to turn, and I to vomit, and if ever I was foxed, it was now, which I cannot say yet, because I fell asleep, and slept till morning. Thus did the day end with joy everywhere; and blessed be God, I have not heard of any mischance to anybody through it all, but only to Serjeant Glynne, whose horse fell upon him yesterday, and is like to kill him, which people do please themselves to see how just God is to punish the rogue at such a time as this: he being now one of the King's Serjeants, and rode in the cavalcade with Maynard, to whom people wish the same fortune. There was also this night, in King Street, a woman had her eye put out by a boy's flinging a firebrand into the coach. Now, after all this, I can say, that, besides the pleasure of the sight of these glorious things, I may now shut my eyes against any other objects, nor for the future trouble myself to see things of state and show, as being sure never to see the like again in this world.

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Let any one judge my surprise and grief at not finding her on my arrival. I now felt regret at having abandoned M. le Maitre, and my uneasiness increased when I learned the misfortunes that had befallen him. His box of music, containing all his fortune—that precious box, preserved with so much care and fatigue—had been seized on at Lyons by means of Count Dorton, who had received information from the Chapter of our having absconded with it. In vain did Le Maitre reclaim his property, his means of existence, the labour of his life; his right to the music in question was at least subject to litigation, but even that liberty was not allowed him, the affair being instantly decided on the principle of superior strength. Thus poor Le Maitre lost the fruit of his talents, the labour of his youth, and principal dependence for the support of old age.

Nothing was wanting to render the news I had received truly afflicting, but I was at an age when even the greatest calamities are to be sustained; accordingly I soon found consolation. I expected shortly to hear news of Madame de Warreus, though I was ignorant of the address, and she knew nothing of my return. As to my desertion of Le Maitre (all things considered) I did not find it so very culpable. I had been serviceable to him in his retreat; it was not in my power to give him any further assistance. Had I remained with him in France it would not have cured his complaint. I could not have saved his music, and should only have doubled his expense

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

In this point of view I then saw my conduct ; I see it otherwise now. It frequently happens that a villainous action does not torment us at the instant we commit it, but on recollection, and sometimes even after a number of years have elapsed, for the remembrance of crimes is not to be extinguished.

The only means I had to obtain news of Madame de Warrens was to remain at Annecy. Where should I seek her at Paris, or how bear the expense of such a journey ? Sooner or later, there was no place where I could be so certain to hear of her as that I was now at ; this consideration determined me to remain there, though my conduct was but indifferent. I did not go to the bishop, who had already befriended me, and might continue to do so ; my patroness was not present, and I feared his reprimands on the subject of our flight ; neither did I go to the seminary. M. Gras was no longer there ; in short, I went to none of my acquaintance. I would gladly have visited the Intendant's lady, but did not dare. I did worse ; I sought out M. Venture, whom ( notwithstanding my enthusiasm ) I had never thought of since my departure. I found him quite gay, in high spirits, and the universal favourite of the ladies of Annecy.

This success completed my infatuation. I saw nothing but M. Venture ; he almost made me forget even Madame de Warrens. That I might profit more at ease by his instructions and example, I proposed to share his lodging, to which he readily consented. It was at a shoemaker's— a pleasant, jovial fellow, who, in his country dialect, called his wife nothing but trollop, an appellation which she certainly merited. Venture took care to augment their differences, though

## ON MYSELF

under an appearance of doing the direct contrary, throwing out in a distant manner, and provincial accent, hints that produced the utmost effect, and furnished such scenes as were sufficient to make anyone die with laughter. Thus the mornings passed without our thinking of them ; at two or three o'clock we took some refreshment. Venture then went to his various engagements, where he supped, while I walked alone, meditating on his great merit, coveting and admiring his rare talents, and cursing my own unlucky stars that did not call me to so happy a life. How little did I then know of myself ! Mine had been a hundred times more delightful, had I not been so great a fool or known better how to enjoy it.

Madame de Warrens had taken no one with her but Anet. Merceret, her chamber-maid, whom I have before mentioned, still remained in the house. Merceret was something older than myself, not pretty, but tolerably agreeable ; good-natured, free from malice, having no fault to my knowledge but being a little refractory with her mistress. I often went to see her ; she was an old acquaintance, who recalled to my remembrance one more beloved, and this made her dear to me. She had several friends, and among others one Mademoiselle Giraud, a Genevese, who, for the punishment of my sins, took it in her head to have an inclination for me, always pressing Merceret, when she returned her visits, to bring me with her. As I liked Merceret, I felt no disinclination to accompany her ; besides, I met there with other young people whose company pleased me. For Mademoiselle Giraud, who offered every kind of enticement, nothing could increase the aversion I had for her. When she



## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

drew near me, with her dried black snout, smeared with her Spanish snuff, it was with the utmost difficulty that I could refrain from expressing my distaste ; but, being pleased with her visitors, I took patience. Among these were two girls who (either to pay their court to Mademoiselle Giraud or myself ) paid me every possible attention. I conceived this to be only friendship, but have since thought it depended only on myself to have discovered something more, though I did not even think of it at the time.

There was another reason for my stupidity. Seamstresses, chamber-maids, or milliners, never tempted me : I sighed for ladies ! Every one has his peculiar taste ; this has ever been mine, being in this particular of a different opinion from Horace. Yet it is not vanity of riches or rank that attracts me : it is well preserved complexion, fine hands, elegance of ornament, an air of delicacy and neatness throughout the whole person, more in taste in the manner of expressing themselves, a finer or better made gown a well turned ankle, small feet, ribbons, lace, and well dressed hair : I even prefer those who have less natural beauty, provided they are elegantly decorated. I freely confess this preference is very ridiculous, yet my heart gives in to it spite of my understanding. Well, even this advantage presented itself, and it only depended on my own resolution to have seized the opportunity.

How do I love, from time to time, to return to those moments of my youth, which were so charmingly delightful : so short, so scarce. and enjoyed at so cheap a rate !—how fondly do I wish to dwell on them ! Even yet the remembrance of these scenes warms my heart with a chaste rapture, which appears necessary to reanimate my droop-

## ON MYSELF

ing courage and enable me to sustain the weariness of my latter days

The appearance of Aurora seemed so delightful one morning that, putting on my clothes, I hastened into the country to see the rising of the sun. I enjoyed that pleasure in its utmost extent. It was one week after mid-summer, the earth was covered with verdure and flowers; the nightingales, whose soft warblings were almost concluded, seemed to vie with each other, and in concert with birds of various kinds to bid adieu to spring, and hail the approach of a beautiful summer's day—one of those lovely days that are no longer to be enjoyed at my age, and which have never been seen on the melancholy soil I now inhabit.

I had rambled insensibly to a considerable distance from the town. The heat augmenting, I was walking in the shade, along a valley by the side of a brook, when I heard behind me the step of horses and the voices of some females who, though they seemed embarrassed, did not laugh the less heartily on that account. I turn round, hear myself called by name, and approaching, find two young people of my acquaintance, Mademoiselle de G— and Mademoiselle Galley, who, not being very excellent horse-women, could not make their horses cross the rivulet.

Mademoiselle de G— was a young lady of Berne, very amiable: who, having been sent from that country for some youthful folly, had imitated Madame de Warrens, at whose house I had sometimes seen her, but not having, like her, a pension, she had been fortunate in this attachment to Mademoiselle Galley, who had prevailed on her mother to engage her young friend as a companion till she could be otherwise provided for. Mademoiselle Galley was one year younger than

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

her friend, handsomer, more delicate, more ingenuous, and, to complete all, extremely well made. They loved each other tenderly, and the good disposition of both could not fail to render their union durable, if some lover did not derange it. They informed me they were going to Toune, an old castle belonging to Madame Galley, and implored my assistance to make their horses cross the stream, not being able to compass it themselves. I would have given each a cut or two with the whip, but they feared I might be kicked and themselves thrown. I therefore had recourse to another expedient. I took hold of Mademoiselle Galley's horse and led him through the brook, the water reaching half-way up my legs. The other followed without any difficulty. This done, I would have paid my compliments to the ladies, and walked off like a great booby as I was, but after whispering each other, Mademoiselle de G— said, 'No, no, you must not think to escape thus; you have got wet in our service, and we ought in conscience to take care of and dry you. If you please, you must go with us; you are now our prisoner.' My heart began to beat—I looked at Mademoiselle Galley—'Yes, yes,' added she, laughing at my fearful look, 'our prisoner of war; come, get up behind her, we shall give a good account of you.' 'But, Mademoiselle,' continued I, 'I have not the honour to be acquainted with your mother; what will she say on my arrival?' 'Her mother,' replied Mademoiselle de G—, 'is not at Toune. We are alone; we shall return at night, and you shall come back with us.'

The stroke of electricity has not a more instantaneous effect than these words produced on me. Leaping behind Mademoiselle de G—, I trembled

## ON MYSELF

with joy, and when it became necessary to clasp her in order to hold myself on, my heart beat so violently that she perceived it, and told me hers beat also from a fear of falling. In my present posture, I might naturally have considered this an invitation to satisfy myself of the truth of her assertion, yet I did not dare; and during the whole way, my arms served as a girdle—a very close one, I must confess—without being a moment displaced. Some women that may read this would be for giving me a box on the ear, and truly I deserved it.

The gaiety of the journey and the chat of those girls so enlivened me that, during the whole time we passed together, we never ceased talking a moment. They had set me so thoroughly at ease that my tongue spoke as fast as my eyes, though not exactly the same things. Some minutes, indeed, when I was left alone with either the conversation became a little embarrassed, but neither of them was absent long enough to allow time for explaining the cause.

Arrived at Toune, and myself well dried, we breakfasted together; after which it was necessary to settle the important business of preparing dinner. The young ladies cooked, kissing from time to time the farmer's children, while the poor scullion looked on grumbling. Provisions had been sent for from town, and there was everything necessary for a good dinner, but unhappily they had forgot wine. This forgetfulness was by no means astonishing in girls who seldom drank any, but I was sorry for the omission, as I had reckoned on its help, thinking it might add to my confidence. They were sorry likewise, and perhaps from the same motive; though I have no reason to say this, for their lively and charm-

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

ing gaiety was innocence itself; besides, there were two of them, what could they expect from me? They went everywhere about the neighbourhood to seek for wine, but none could be procured, so pure and sober are the peasants in those parts. As they were expressing their concern, I begged them not to give themselves any uneasiness on my account, for while with them I had no occasion for wine to intoxicate me. This was the only gallantry I ventured at during the whole of the day, and I believe the sly rogues saw well enough that I said nothing but the truth.

We dined in the kitchen. The two friends were seated on the benches, one on each side the long table, and their guest at the end, between them, on a three legged stool. What a dinner! how charming the remembrance! While we can enjoy at so small an expense, such pure, such true delights, why should we be solicitous for others? Never did those *petits soupers*, so celebrated in Paris, equal this; I do not only say for real pleasure and gaiety, but even for sensuality.

After dinner, we were economical; instead of drinking the coffee we had reserved at breakfast, we kept it for an afternoon collation, with cream, and some cakes they had brought with them. To keep our appetites in play, we went into the orchard, meaning to finish our dessert with cherries. I got into a tree, throwing them down bunches, from which they returned the stones through the branches. One time, Mademoiselle Galley, holding out her apron, and drawing back her head, stood so fair, and I took such good aim, that I dropped a bunch into her bosom. On her laughing, I said to myself, 'Why are not my lips cherries? how gladly would I throw them there likewise!'

## ON MYSELF

Thus the day passed with the greatest freedom, yet with the utmost decency ; not a single equivocal word, not one attempt at double-meaning pleasantry ; yet this delicacy was not affected, we only performed the parts our hearts dictated ; in short, my modesty, some will say my folly, was such that the greatest familiarity that escaped me was once kissing the hand of Mademoiselle Galley ; it is true, the attending circumstances helped to stamp a value on this trifling favour ; we were alone, I was embarrassed, her eyes were fixed on the ground, and my lips, instead of uttering words, were pressed on her hand, which she drew gently back after the salute, without any appearance of displeasure. I know what I should have said to her, but her friend entered, and at that moment I thought her ugly.

At length they bethought themselves that they must return to town before night ; even now we had but just time to reach it by daylight, and we hastened our departure in the same order we came. Had I pleased myself, I should certainly have reversed this order, for the glance of Mademoiselle Galley had reached my heart, but I dared not mention it, and the proposal could not reasonably come from her. On the way, we expressed our sorrow that the day was over ; but far from complaining of the shortness of its duration, we were conscious of having prolonged it by every possible amusement.

I quitted them in nearly the same spot where I had taken them up. With what regret did we part ! With what pleasure did we form projects to renew our meeting ! Delightful hours, which we passed innocently together, yet were worth ages of familiarity ! The sweet remembrance of this day cost those amiable girls nothing, the tender union

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

which reigned among us equalled more lively pleasures, with which it could not have existed. We loved each other without shame or mystery, and wished to continue our reciprocal affection. There is a species of enjoyment connected with innocence of manners, which is superior to any other, because it has no interval; for myself, the remembrance of such a day touches me nearer, delights me more, and returns with greater rapture to my heart, than any other pleasures I ever tasted. I hardly knew what I wished with those charming girls. I do not say that had the arrangement been in my power, I should have divided my heart between them; I certainly felt some degree of preference; though I should have been happy to have had Mademoiselle de G— for a mistress, I think, by choice, I should have liked her better as a confidante; be that as it may, I felt on leaving them as though I could not live without either. Who would have thought that I should never see them more, and that here our ephemeral amours must end?

Those who read this will not fail to laugh at my gallantries, and remark that, after very promising preliminaries, my most forward adventures concluded by a kiss of the hand. Yet be not mistaken, reader, in your estimate of my enjoyments: I have, perhaps, tasted more real pleasure in my amours, which concluded by a kiss of the hand, than you will ever have in yours, which, at least, begin there.

Venture, who had gone to bed very late the night before, came in soon after me. I did not now see him with my usual satisfaction, and took care not to inform him how I had passed the day. The ladies had spoken of him slightly, and appeared discontented at finding me in such bad hands.

## ON MYSELF

This hurt him in my esteem; besides, whatever diverted my ideas from them was at this time disagreeable. However, he soon brought me back to him and myself, by speaking of the situation of my affairs, which was too critical to last; for though I spent very little, my slender finances were almost exhausted. I was without resource; no news of Madame de Warrens; not knowing what would become of me, and feeling a cruel pang at heart to see the friend of Mademoiselle Galley reduced to beggary.

I now learned from Venture that he had spoken of me to the Judge Major, and would take me next day to dine with him; that he was a man who by means of his friends might render me essential service. In other respects he was a desirable acquaintance, being a man of wit and letters, of agreeable conversation, one who possessed talents and loved them in others. After this discourse (mingling the most serious concerns with the most trifling frivolity) he showed me a pretty couplet, which came from Paris, on an air in one of Mouret's operas, which was then playing. Monsieur Simon (the Judge Major) was so pleased with this couplet that he determined to make another in answer to it, on the same air. He had desired Venture to write one, and he wished me to make a third, that, as he expressed it, they might see couplets start up next day like incidents in a comic romance.

In the night (not being able to sleep) I composed a couplet, as my first essay in poetry. It was passable; better, or at least composed with more taste, than it would have been the preceding night, the subject being tenderness, to which my heart was now entirely disposed. In the morning I showed my performance to Venture, who, being



## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

pleased with the couplet, put it in his pocket, without informing me whether he had made his. We dined with M. Simon, who treated us very politely. The conversation was agreeable; indeed, it could not be otherwise between two men of natural good sense, improved by reading. For me, I acted my proper part, which was to listen without attempting to join in the conversation. Neither of them mentioned the couplet, neither did I, nor do I know that it ever passed for mine.

M. Simon appeared satisfied with my behaviour; indeed, it was almost all he saw of me in this interview. We had often met at Madame de Warrens', but he had never paid much attention to me; it is from this dinner, therefore, that I date our acquaintance, which, though of no use in regard to the object I then had in view, was afterwards productive of advantages which make me recollect it with pleasure.

I should be wrong not to give some account of his person, since from his office of magistrate, and the reputation of wit on which he piqued himself, no idea could be formed of it. The judge major, Simon, certainly was not two feet high; his legs, spare, straight, and tolerably long, would have added something to his stature had they been vertical, but they stood in the direction of an open pair of compasses. His body was not only short, but thin, being in every respect of most inconceivable smallness—when naked, he must have appeared like a grasshopper. His head was of the common size, to which appertained a well formed face, a noble look, and tolerably fine eyes; in short, it appeared a borrowed head, stuck on a miserable stump. He might very well have dis-

## ON MYSELF

pensed with dress, for his large wig alone covered him from head to foot.

He had two voices, perfectly different, which intermingled perpetually in his conversation, forming at first a diverting, but afterwards a very disagreeable contrast. One, grave and sonorous, was, if I may hazard the expression, the voice of his head; the other, clear, sharp and piercing, the voice of his body. When he paid particular attention, and spoke leisurely, so as to preserve his breath, he could continue his deep tone; but if he was the least animated, or attempted a lively accent, his voice sounded like the whistling of a key, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could return to the bass.

With the figure I have just described, and which is by no means overcharged, M. Simon was gallant, ever entertaining the ladies with soft tales, and carrying the decoration of his person even to foppery. Willing to make use of every advantage, he, during the morning, gave audience in bed; for when a handsome head was discovered on the pillow, no one could have imagined what belonged to it. This circumstance gave birth to scenes, which I am certain are yet remembered by all Annecy.

One morning, when he expected to give audience in bed, or rather on the bed, having on a handsome night-cap ornamented with rose-coloured ribbon, a countryman arriving knocked at the door; the maid happened to be out; the judge, therefore, hearing the knock repeated, cried, 'Come in,' and as he spoke rather loud, it was in his shrill tone. The man entered, looked about, endeavouring to discover whence the female voice proceeded, and at length, seeing a handsome head-dress set off with ribbons, was

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

about to leave the room, making the supposed lady a hundred apologies. M. Simon, in a rage, screamed the more; and the countryman, yet more confirmed in his opinion, conceiving himself to be insulted, began railing in his turn, saying that, 'apparently, she was nothing better than a common street-walker, and that the judge major should be ashamed of setting such ill examples.' The enraged magistrate having no other weapon than the jordan under his bed, was just going to throw it at the poor fellow's head as his servant returned.

This dwarf, ill used by nature as to his person, was recompensed by possessing an understanding naturally agreeable, and which he had been careful to cultivate. Though he was esteemed a good lawyer, he did not like his profession, delighting more in the finer parts of literature, which he studied with success: above all, he possessed that superficial brilliancy, the art of pleasing in conversation, even with the ladies. He knew by heart a number of little stories, which he perfectly well knew how to make the most of, relating with an air of secrecy, and as an anecdote of yesterday, what happened sixty years before. He understood music, and could sing agreeably; in short, for a magistrate, he had many pleasing talents. By flattering the ladies of Annecy, he became fashionable among them, appearing continually in their train. He even pretended to favours, at which they were much amused. A Madame D' Epagny used to say, 'the greatest favour he could aspire to, was to kiss a lady on her knees.'

As he was well read, and spoke fluently, his conversation was both amusing and instructive. When I afterwards took a taste for study, I cultivated his acquaintance, and found my account in

## ON MYSELF

it. When at Chambery, I frequently went from thence to see him. His praises increased my emulation, to which he added some good advice respecting the prosecution of my studies, which I found useful. Unhappily, this weakly body contained a very feeling soul. Some years after he was chagrined by I know not what unlucky affair but it cost him his life. This was really unfortunate, for he was a good little man, whom at a first acquaintance one laughed at, but afterwards loved. Though our situations in life were very little connected with each other, as I received some useful lessons from him, I thought gratitude demanded that I should dedicate a few sentences to his memory.

As soon as I found myself at liberty, I ran into the street where Mademoiselle Galley lived, flattering myself that I should see some one go in or out, or at least open a window, but I was mistaken—not even a cat appeared, the house remaining as close all the time as if it had been uninhabited. The street was small and lonely ; any one loitering about was, consequently, more likely to be noticed ; from time to time people passed in and out of the neighbourhood. I was much embarrassed, thinking my person might be known, and the cause that brought me there conjectured ; this idea tortured me, for I have ever preferred the honour and happiness of those I love to my own pleasures.

At length, weary of playing the Spanish lover, and having no guitar, I determined to write to Mademoiselle de G—. I should have preferred writing to her friend, but did not dare take that liberty, as it appeared more proper to begin with her to whom I owed the acquaintance, and with whom I was most familiar. Having written my

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

letter, I took it to Mademoiselle Giraud, as the young ladies had agreed at parting, they having furnished me with this expedient. Mademoiselle Giraud was a quilter, and sometimes worked at Madame Galley's, which procured her free admission to the house. I must confess, I was not thoroughly satisfied with this messenger, but was cautious of starting difficulties, fearing that if I objected to her no other might be named, and it was impossible to intimate that she had an inclination to me herself. I even felt humiliated that she should think that I could imagine her of the same sex as those young ladies; in a word, I accepted her agency rather than none, and availed myself of it at all events.

At the very first word, Giraud discovered me. I must own this was not a difficult matter, for if sending a letter to young girls had not spoken sufficiently plain, my foolish embarrassed air would have betrayed me. It will easily be supposed that the employment gave her little satisfaction; she understood it, however, and performed it faithfully. The next morning I ran to her house and found an answer ready for me. How did I hurry away that I might have an opportunity to read and kiss it alone! though this need not be told, but the plan adopted by Mademoiselle Giraud (and in which I found more delicacy and moderation than I had expected) should. She had sense enough to conclude that her thirty seven years, hare's eyes, daubed nose, shrill voice, and black skin stood no chance against two elegant young girls, in all the height and bloom of beauty; she resolved, therefore, neither to betray nor assist them, choosing rather to lose me entirely than entertain me for them.

As Merceret had not heard from her mistress

## ON MYSELF

it. When at Chambery, I frequently went from thence to see him. His praises increased my emulation, to which he added some good advice respecting the prosecution of my studies, which I found useful. Unhappily, this weakly body contained a very feeling soul. Some years after he was chagrined by I know not what unlucky affair but it cost him his life. This was really unfortunate, for he was a good little man, whom at a first acquaintance one laughed at, but afterwards loved. Though our situations in life were very little connected with each other, as I received some useful lessons from him, I thought gratitude demanded that I should dedicate a few sentences to his memory.

As soon as I found myself at liberty, I ran into the street where Mademoiselle Galley lived, flattering myself that I should see some one go in or out, or at least open a window, but I was mistaken—not even a cat appeared, the house remaining as close all the time as if it had been uninhabited. The street was small and lonely ; any one loitering about was, consequently, more likely to be noticed ; from time to time people passed in and out of the neighbourhood. I was much embarrassed, thinking my person might be known, and the cause that brought me there conjectured ; this idea tortured me, for I have ever preferred the honour and happiness of those I love to my own pleasures.

At length, weary of playing the Spanish lover, and having no guitar, I determined to write to Mademoiselle de G—. I should have preferred writing to her friend, but did not dare take that liberty, as it appeared more proper to begin with her to whom I owed the acquaintance, and with whom I was most familiar. Having written my

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

letter, I took it to Mademoiselle Giraud, as the young ladies had agreed at parting, they having furnished me with this expedient. Mademoiselle Giraud was a quilter, and sometimes worked at Madame Galley's, which procured her free admission to the house. I must confess, I was not thoroughly satisfied with this messenger, but was cautious of starting difficulties, fearing that if I objected to her no other might be named, and it was impossible to intimate that she had an inclination to me herself. I even felt humiliated that she should think that I could imagine her of the same sex as those young ladies; in a word, I accepted her agency rather than none, and availed myself of it at all events.

At the very first word, Giraud discovered me. I must own this was not a difficult matter, for if sending a letter to young girls had not spoken sufficiently plain, my foolish embarrassed air would have betrayed me. It will easily be supposed that the employment gave her little satisfaction; she understood it, however, and performed it faithfully. The next morning I ran to her house and found an answer ready for me. How did I hurry away that I might have an opportunity to read and kiss it alone! though this need not be told, but the plan adopted by Mademoiselle Giraud (and in which I found more delicacy and moderation than I had expected) should. She had sense enough to conclude that her thirty seven years, hare's eyes, daubed nose, shrill voice, and black skin stood no chance against two elegant young girls, in all the height and bloom of beauty; she resolved, therefore, neither to betray nor assist them, choosing rather to lose me entirely than entertain me for them.

As Merceret had not heard from her mistress

## ON MYSELF

for some time, she thought of returning to Fribourg, and the persuasions of Giraud determined her; nay, more, she intimated it was proper someone should conduct her to her father's, and proposed me. As I happened to be agreeable to little Merceret, she approved the idea, and the same day they mentioned it to me as a fixed point. Finding nothing displeasing in the manner they had disposed of me, I consented, thinking it could not be above a week's journey at most; but Giraud, who had arranged the whole affair, thought otherwise. It was necessary to avow the state of my finances, and the conclusion was that Merceret should defray my expenses; but to retrench on one hand what was expended on the other, I advised that her little baggage should be sent on before, and that we should proceed by easy journeys on foot.

I am sorry to have so many girls in love with me, but as there is nothing to be very vain of in the success of these amours, I think I may tell the truth without scruple. Merceret, younger and less artful than Giraud, never made me so many advances, but she imitated my manners, my actions, repeated my words, and showed me all those little attentions I ought to have had for her. Being very timorous, she took great care that we should both sleep in the same chamber, a circumstance that usually produces some consequences between a lad of twenty and a girl of twenty-five.

For once, however, it went no further; my simplicity being such, that though Merceret was by no means a disagreeable girl, an idea of gallantry never entered my head, and even if it had, I was too great a novice to have profited by it. I could not imagine how two young persons could bring



## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

themselves to sleep together, thinking that such familiarity must require an age of preparation. If poor Merceret paid my expenses in hopes of any return, she was terribly cheated, for we arrived at Fribourg exactly as we had quitted Annecy.

I passed through Geneva without visiting anyone. While going over the bridges, I found myself so affected that I could scarcely proceed. Never could I see the walls of that city, never could I enter it, without feeling my heart sink from excess of tenderness, at the same time that the image of liberty elevated my soul. The ideas of equality, union, and gentleness of manners touched me even to tears, and inspired me with a lively regret at having forfeited all these advantages. What an error was I in! but yet how natural! I imagined I saw all this in my native country, because I bore it in my heart.

It was necessary to pass through Nyon; could I do this without seeing my good father? Had I resolved on doing so, I must afterwards have died with regret. I left Merceret at the inn, and ventured to his house. How wrong was I to fear him! On seeing me, his soul gave way to the parental tenderness with which it was filled. What tears were mingled with our embraces! He thought I was returned to him. I related my history, and informed him of my resolution. He opposed it feebly, mentioning the dangers to which I exposed myself, and telling me the shortest follies were the best, but did not attempt to keep me by force, in which particular I think he acted right; but it is certain he did not do everything in his power to retain me, even by fair means. Whether after the step I had taken, he thought I ought not to return, or was puzzled at my age to know what to do with me, I have since found

## ON MYSELF

that he conceived a very unjust opinion of my travelling companion. My mother-in-law, a good woman, a little coaxingly, put on an appearance of wishing me to stay to supper. I did not, however, comply, but told them I proposed remaining longer with them on my return, leaving as a deposit my little packet, that had come by water, and would have been an incumbrance, had I taken it with me. I continued my journey the next morning, well satisfied that I had seen my father and had taken courage to do my duty.

We arrived without any accident at Fribourg. Towards the conclusion of the journey, the politeness of Mademoiselle Merceret rather diminished, and after our arrival, she treated me even with coldness. Her father, who was not in the best circumstances, did not show me much attention, and I was obliged to lodge at an ale-house. I went to see them the next morning, and received an invitation to dine there, which I accepted. We separated without tears at night; I returned to my paltry lodging, and departed the second day after my arrival, almost without knowing whither to go.

This was a circumstance of my life in which Providence offered me precisely what was necessary to make my days pass happily. Merceret was a good girl, neither witty, handsome, nor ugly; not very lively, but tolerably rational, except while under the influence of some little humours, which usually evaporated in tears, without any violent outbreak of temper. She had a real inclination for me; I might have married her without difficulty, and followed her father's business. My taste for music would have made me love her; I should have settled at Fribourg, a small town, not pretty, but inhabited by very worthy people. I should

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

certainly have missed great pleasures, but should have lived in peace to my last hour, and I must know best what I should have gained by such a step.

I did not return to Nyon, but to Lausanne, wishing to gratify myself with a view of that beautiful lake, which is seen there in its utmost extent. The greater part of my secret motives have not been so reasonable. Distant expectation has rarely strength enough to influence my actions, the uncertainty of the future ever making me regard projects whose execution requires a length of time as deceitful lures. I give in to visionary scenes of hope as well as others, provided they cost nothing; but if attended with any trouble, I have done with them. "The smallest, the most trifling pleasure that is conveniently within my reach, tempts me more than all the joys of paradise. I must except, however, those pleasures which are necessarily followed by pain. I only love those enjoyments which are unadulterated, which can never be the case where we are conscious they must be followed by repentance.

It was necessary I should arrive at some place, and the nearest was best, for having lost my way on the road, I found myself in the evening at Moudon, where I spent all that remained of my little stock except ten creuzers, which served to purchase my next day's dinner. Arriving in the evening at Lausanne, I went into an ale-house, without a penny in my pocket to pay for my lodging, or knowing what would become of me. I found myself extremely hungry. Setting, therefore, a good face on the matter, I ordered supper, made my meal, went to bed without thought, and slept with great composure. In the morning, having breakfasted and reckoned with my host,

## ON MYSELF

I offered to leave my waistcoat in pledge for seven batz, which was the amount of my expenses. The honest man refused this, saying, thank heaven, he had never stripped anyone, and would not now begin for seven batz; adding, I should keep my waistcoat and pay him when I could. I was affected with this unexpected kindness, but felt it less than I ought to have done, or have since experienced on the remembrance of it. I did not fail sending him his money, with thanks, by one I could depend on. Fifteen years after, passing Lausanne, on my return from Italy, I felt a sensible regret at having forgotten the name of the landlord and house. I wished to see him, and should have felt real pleasure in recalling to his memory that worthy action. Services, which doubtless have been much more important, but rendered with ostentation, have not appeared to me so worthy of gratitude as the simple, unaffected humanity of this honest man.

As I approached Lausanne, I thought of my distress and the means of extricating myself without appearing in want to my mother-in-law. I compared myself, in this walking pilgrimage, to my friend Venture, on his arrival at Annecy, and was so warmed with the idea that, without recollecting that I had neither his gentility nor his talents, I determined to act the part of little Venture at Lausanne, to teach music, which I did not understand, and say I came from Paris, where I had never been.

In consequence of this noble project (as there was no company where I could introduce myself without expense, and not choosing to venture among professional people), I enquired for some little inn, where I could lodge cheap, and was directed to one named Perrotet, who took in

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

boarders. This Perrotet, who was one of the best men in the world, received me very kindly, and after having heard my feigned story and profession, promised to speak of me, and endeavour to procure me scholars, saying he should not expect any money till I had earned it. His price for board, though moderate in itself, was a great deal to me; he advised me, therefore, to begin with half board, which consisted of good soup only for dinner, but a plentiful supper at night. I closed with this proposition, and the poor Perrotet trusted me with great cheerfulness, sparing, meantime, no trouble to be useful to me.

Having found so many good people in my youth, why do I find so few in my age? Is their race extinct? No; but I do not seek them in the same situation I did formerly among the commonalty, where violent passions predominate only at intervals, and where nature speaks her genuine sentiments. In more elevated stations they are entirely smothered, and, under the mask of sentiment, only interest or vanity is heard.

Having written to my father from Lausanne, he sent my packet and some excellent advice, of which I should have profited better. I have already observed that I have moments of inconceivable *délirium*, in which I am entirely out of myself. The adventure I am about to relate is an instance of this: to comprehend how deeply my brain was turned, and to what degree I had *Venturised* (if I may be allowed the expression), the many extravagances I ran into at the same time should be considered. Behold me, then, a singing master, without knowing how to note a common song; for if the five or six months passed with *Le Maître* had improved me, they could not be supposed sufficient to qualify me for such an

## ON MYSELF

undertaking ; besides, being taught by a master was enough (as I have before observed) to make me learn ill. Being a Parisian from Geneva, and a Catholic in a Protestant country, I thought I should change my name with my religion and country, still approaching as near as possible to the great model I had in view. He called himself Venture de Villeneuve. I changed, by anagram, the name Rousseau into that of Vaussore, calling myself, Monsieur Vaussore de Villeneuve. Venture was a good composer, though he had not said so ; without knowing anything of the art, I boasted of my skill to everyone. This was not all ; being presented to Monsieur de Freytorens, professor of law, who loved music, and who gave concerts at his house, nothing would do but I must give him a proof of my talents ; and accordingly I set about composing a piece for his concerts as boldly as if I had really understood the science. I had the constancy to labour a fortnight at this curious business, to copy it fair, write out the different parts, and distribute them with as much assurance as if they had been masterpieces of harmony ; in short (what will hardly be believed, though strictly true), I tacked a very pretty minuet to the end of it, that was commonly played about the streets, and which many may remember from these words, so well known at that time :—

*Quel caprice !  
Quel injustice !  
Quoi tu Clarice  
Trahiroit tes jeux ? etc.*

Venture had taught me this air with the bass, set to other words, by the help of which I had retained it : thus at the end of my composition, I put this minuet and bass, suppressing the words, and uttering it for my own as confidently as if I

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

had been speaking to the inhabitants of the moon. They assemble to perform my piece : I explain to each the movement, taste of execution, and references to his part—I was fully occupied. They were five or six minutes preparing, which were for me so many ages ; at length, everything is adjusted, myself in a conspicuous situation, a fine roll of paper in my hand, gravely preparing to beat time. I gave four or five strokes with my paper, attending it with ‘Take care!’ They begin. No, never since French operas existed was there such a confused discord ! The minuet, however, presently put all the company in good humour ; hardly was it begun, before I heard bursts of laughter from all parts, everyone congratulating me on my pretty taste of music, declaring this minuet would make me spoken of, and that I merited the loudest praise. It is not necessary to describe my uneasiness, or to own how much I deserved it.

Next day, one of the musicians, name Lutold, came to see me, and was kind enough to congratulate me on my success. The profound conviction of my folly, shame, regret, and the state of despair to which I was reduced, with the impossibility of concealing the cruel agitation of my heart, made me open it to him ; giving, therefore, a loose to my tears, not content with owning my ignorance, I told all, conjuring him to secrecy ; he kept his word, as everyone will suppose. The same evening, all Lausanne knew who I was, but, what is more remarkable, no one seemed to know, not even the good Perrotet, who (notwithstanding what had happened) continued to lodge and board me.

I led a melancholy life here ; the consequences of such an essay had not rendered Lausanne a

## ON MYSELF

very agreeable residence. Scholars did not present themselves in crowds, not a single female, and no person of the city. I had only two or three great dunces, as stupid as I was ignorant, who fatigued me to death, and in my hands were not likely to edify much.

At length, I was sent for to a house, where a little serpent of a girl amused herself by showing me a parcel of music that I could not read a note of, and which she had the malice to sing before her master, to teach him how it should be executed; for I was so unable to read an air at first sight, that in the charming concert I have just described, I could not possibly follow the execution a moment, or know whether they played truly what lay before them, and I myself had composed.

In the midst of so many humiliating circumstances, I had the pleasing consolation, from time to time, of receiving letters from my two charming friends. I have ever found the utmost consolatory virtue in the fair; when in disgrace, nothing softens my affliction more than to be sensible that an amiable woman is interested for me. This correspondence ceased soon after, and was never renewed; indeed, it was my own fault, for in changing situations I neglected sending my address, and forced by necessity to think perpetually of myself, I soon forgot them.

It is a long time since I mentioned Madame de Warrens, but it should not be supposed I had forgotten her; never was she a moment absent from my thoughts. I anxiously wished to find her, not merely because she was necessary to my subsistence, but because she was infinitely more necessary to my heart. My attachment to her, (though lively and tender, as it really was) did



## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

not prevent my loving others, but then it was not in the same manner. All equally claimed my tenderness for their charms, but it was those charms alone I loved, my passion would not have survived them ; while Madame de Warrens might have become old or ugly without my loving her the less tenderly. My heart had entirely transmitted to herself the homage it first paid to her beauty, and whatever change she might experience, while she remained herself, my sentiments could not change. I was sensible how much gratitude I owed to her, but in truth, I never thought of it, and whether she served me or not, it would ever have been the same thing. I loved her neither from duty, interest, nor convenience ; I loved her because I was born to love her. During my attachment to another, I own this affection was in some measure deranged ; I did not think so frequently of her, but still with the same pleasure, and never, in love or otherwise, did I think of her without feeling that I could expect no true happiness in life while in a state of separation.

Though in so long a time I had received no news from Madame de Warrens, I never imagined I had entirely lost her, or that she could have forgotten me. I said to myself, she will know sooner or later that I am wandering about and will find some means to inform me of her situation ; I am certain I shall find her. In the meantime, it was a pleasure to live in her native country, to walk in the streets where she had walked, and before the houses that she had lived in ; yet all this was the work of conjecture, for one of my foolish peculiarities was, not daring to inquire after her, or even pronounce her name without the most absolute necessity. It seemed

## ON MYSELF

in speaking of her that I declared all I felt, that my lips revealed the secrets of my heart, and in some degree injured the object of my affection. I believe fear was likewise mingled with this idea; I dreaded to hear ill of her. Her management had been much spoken of, and some little of her conduct in other respects; fearing, therefore, that something might be said which I did not wish to hear, I preferred being silent on the subject.

As my scholars did not take up much of my time, and the town where she was born was not above four leagues from Lausanne, I made it a walk of three or four days; during which time a most pleasant emotion never left me. A view of the Lake of Geneva and its admirable banks had ever, in my idea, a particular attraction which I cannot describe; not arising merely from the beauty of the prospect, but something else, I know not why, more interesting, which affects and softens me. Every time I have approached the Vaudois country, I have experienced an impression composed of the remembrance of Madame de Warrens, who was born there; of my father, who lived there; of Miss Vulson, who had been my first love; and of several pleasant journeys I had made there in my childhood, mingled with some nameless charm, more powerfully attractive than all the rest. When that ardent desire for a life of happiness and tranquillity (which ever follows me, and for which I was born) inflames my mind, 'tis ever to the country of Vaud, near the lake, in those charming plains, that imagination leads me. An orchard on the banks of that lake, and no other, is absolutely necessary; a firm friend, an amiable woman, a cow, and a little

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

boat; nor could I enjoy perfect happiness on earth without these concomitants. I laugh at the simplicity with which I have several times gone into that country for the sole purpose of seeking this imaginary happiness, when I was ever surprised to find the inhabitants, particularly the women, of a quite different disposition to what I sought. How strange did this appear to me! The country and people who inhabit it, were never, in my idea, formed for each other.

Walking along these beautiful banks, on my way to Vevey, I gave myself up to the soft melancholy: my heart rushed with ardour into a thousand innocent felicities; melting to tenderness, I sighed and wept like a child. How often, stopping to weep more at my ease, and seated on a large stone, did I amuse myself with seeing my tears drop into the water!

On my arrival at Vevey, I lodged at the Key, and during the two days I remained there, without any acquaintance, conceived a love for that city, which has followed me through all my travels, and was finally the cause that I fixed on this spot, in the novel I afterwards wrote, for the residence of my hero and heroines. I would say to any one who has taste and feeling, go to Vevey, visit the surrounding country, examine the prospects, go on the lake, and then say, whether nature has not designed this country for a Julia, a Clara, and a St. Preux; but do not seek them there. I now return to my story.

Giving myself out for a Catholic, I followed without mystery or scruple the religion I had embraced. On a Sunday, if the weather was fine, I went to hear mass at Assans, a place two leagues distant from Lausanne, and generally in company with other Catholics, particularly

## ON MYSELF

a Parisian embroiderer, whose name I have forgotten. Not such a Parisian as myself, but a real native of Paris, an arch-Parisian from his maker, yet honest as a peasant. He loved his country so well, that he would not doubt my being his countryman, for fear he should not have so much occasion to speak of it. The lieutenant-governor, M. de Crouzas, had a gardener, who was likewise from Paris, but not so complaisant; he thought the glory of his country concerned, when anyone claimed that honour who was not really entitled to it; he put questions to me, therefore, with an air and tone, as if certain to detect me in a falsehood, and once, smiling malignantly, asked me what was remarkable in the *Marcheneuf*. It may be supposed I evaded the question; but I have since passed twenty years at Paris, and certainly know that city; yet, was the same question repeated at this day, I should be equally embarrassed to answer it, and from this embarrassment it might be concluded I had never been there: thus, even when we meet with truths, we are subject to build our opinions on circumstances, which may easily deceive us.

I formed no ideas, while at Lausanne, that were worth recollecting, nor can I say exactly how long I remained there; I only know that, not finding sufficient to subsist on, I went from thence to Neufchatel, where I passed the winter. Here I succeeded better; I got some scholars, and saved enough to pay my good friend Perrotet, who had faithfully sent my baggage, though at that time I was considerably in his debt.

By continuing to teach music, I insensibly gained some knowledge of it. The life I led was sufficiently agreeable, and any reasonable man

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

might have been satisfied, but my unsettled heart demanded something more. On Sundays, or whenever I had leisure, I wandered, sighing and thoughtful, about the adjoining woods, and when once out of the city, never returned before night. One day, being at Boudry, I went to dine at a public-house, where I saw a man with a long beard, dressed in a violet-coloured Grecian habit, with a fur cap, and whose air and manner were rather noble. This person found some difficulty in making himself understood, speaking only an unintelligible jargon, which bore more resemblance to Italian than any other language. I understood almost all he said, and I was the only person present who could do so, for he was obliged to make his requests known to the landlord and others about him by signs. On my speaking a few words in Italian, which he perfectly understood, he got up and embraced me with rapture; a connection was soon formed, and from that moment, I became his interpreter. His dinner was excellent, mine rather worse than indifferent; he gave me an invitation to dine with him, which I accepted without much ceremony. Drinking and chatting soon rendered us familiar, and by the end of the repast, we had all the disposition in the world to become inseparable companions. He informed me he was a Greek prelate, and *Archimandrite* of Jerusalem; that he had undertaken to make a gathering in Europe for the re-establishment of the Holy Sepulchre, and showed me some very fine patents from the Czarina, the Emperor, and several other sovereigns. He was tolerably content with what he had collected hitherto, though he had experienced inconceivable difficulties in Germany; for not understanding a word of German, Latin or

## ON MYSELF

French, he had been obliged to have recourse to his Greek, Turkish, Lingua Franca, which did not procure him much in the country he was travelling through; his proposal, therefore, to me was, that I should accompany him in the quality of secretary and interpreter. In spite of my violet-coloured coat, which accorded well enough with the proposed employment, he guessed from my meagre appearance, that I should easily be gained: and he was not mistaken. The bargain was soon made; I demanded nothing, and he promised liberally; thus, without any security or knowledge of the person I was about to serve, I gave myself up entirely to his conduct, and the next day beheld me 'on an expedition to Jerusalem.

We began our expedition unsuccessfully by the canton of Fribourg. Episcopal dignity would not suffer him to play the beggar, or solicit help from private individuals; but we presented his commission to the Senate, who gave him a trifling sum. From thence we went to Berne, where we lodged at the Falcon, then a good inn, and frequented by respectable company, the public table being well supplied and numerous attended. I had fared indifferently so long that I was glad to make myself amends, therefore took care to profit by the present occasion. My lord, the Archimandrite, was himself an excellent companion, loved good cheer, was gay, spoke well for those who understood him, and knew perfectly well how to make the most of his Grecian erudition. One day, at dessert, while cracking nuts, he cut his finger pretty deeply, and as it bled freely, showed it to the company, saying with a laugh, *Mirate, Signori; questo e sangue Pelasgo.*

At Berne, I was not useless to him, nor was my

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

performance so bad as I had feared; I certainly spoke better and with more confidence than I could have done for myself. Matters were not conducted here with the same simplicity as at Fribourg; long and frequent conferences were necessary with the Premiers of the State, and the examination of his titles was not the work of a day; at length, everything being adjusted, he was admitted to an audience by the Senate: I entered with him as interpreter and was ordered to speak. I expected nothing less, for it never entered my mind that, after such long and frequent conferences with the members, it was necessary to address the assembly collectively, as if nothing had been said. Judge my embarrassment! a man so bashful, to speak, not only in public, but before the whole of the Senate of Berne! To speak impromptu, without a single moment for recollection; it was enough to annihilate me. I was not even intimidated. I described distinctly and clearly the commission of the Archimandrite; extolled the piety of those princes who had contributed, and to heighten that of their excellencies by emulation, added, that less could not be expected from their well-known munificence; then, endeavoured to prove that this good work was equally interesting to all Christians, without distinction of sect; and concluded, by promising the benediction of heaven to all those who took part in it. I will not say that my discourse was the cause of our success, but it was certainly well received; and on our quitting, the Archimandrite was gratified by a very genteel present, to which some very handsome compliments were added on the understanding of his secretary; these I had the agreeable office of interpreting, but could not take courage to render them literally.

## ON MYSELF

This was the only time in my life that I spoke in public, and before a sovereign; and the only time, perhaps, that I spoke boldly and well. What difference in the disposition of the same person. Three years ago, having been to see my old friend, M. Rougin, at Yverdon, I received a deputation to thank me for some books I had presented to the library of that city. The Swiss are great speakers; these gentlemen, accordingly, made me a long harangue which I thought myself obliged in honour to answer, but so embarrassed myself in the attempt, that my head became confused, I stopped short, and was laughed at. Though naturally timid, I have sometimes acted with confidence in my youth, but never in my advanced age: the more I have seen of the world the less I have been able to adopt its manners.

On leaving Berne, we went to Soleure; the Archimandrite designing to re-enter Germany, and return through Hungary or Poland to his own country. This would have been a prodigious tour; but as the contents of his purse rather increased than diminished during his journey, he was in no haste to return. For me, who was almost as much pleased on horseback as on foot, I would have desired no better than to have travelled thus during my whole life; but it was pre-ordained that my journey should soon end.

The first thing we did after our arrival at Soleure was to pay our respects to the French ambassador there. Unfortunately for my bishop, this chanced to be the Marquis de Bonac, who had been ambassador at the Porte, and consequently was acquainted with every particular relative to the Holy Sepulchre. The Archimandrite had an audience that lasted about a quarter of an hour, to which I was not admitted, as



## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

the ambassador spoke French and Italian at least as well as myself. On my Grecian's returning, I was prepared to follow him, but was detained. It was now my turn. Having called myself a Parisian, as such I was under the jurisdiction of his excellency: he therefore asked me who I was, exhorting me to tell the truth. This I promised to do, but entreated a private audience, which was immediately granted. The ambassador took me to his closet, and shut the door; there, throwing myself at his feet, I kept my word, nor should I have said less had I promised nothing, for a continual wish to unbosom myself puts my heart perpetually upon my lips. After having disclosed myself without reserve to the musician Lutold, there was no occasion to attempt acting the mysterious with the Marquis de Bonac, who was so well pleased with my little history, and the ingenuousness with which I had related it, that he led me to the ambassadress, and presented me, with an abridgment of my recital. Madame de Bonac received me kindly, saying that I must not be suffered to follow that Greek monk. It was accordingly resolved that I should remain at their hotel till something better could be done for me. I wished to bid adieu to my poor Archimandrite, for whom I had conceived an attachment, but was not permitted. They sent him word that I was to be detained there, and in a quarter of an hour after, I saw my little bundle arrive. M. de la Martinière, secretary to the embassy, had in a manner the care of me. While following him to the chamber appropriated to my use, he said 'This apartment was occupied, under the Count de Luc, by a celebrated man of the same name as yourself; it is in your power to every respect, and cause it to be

## ON MYSELF

Rousseau the First, Rousseau the Second.' This similarity, which I did not then expect, would have been less flattering to my wishes could I have foreseen at what price I should one day purchase the distinction.

What M. de la Martinière had said excited my curiosity. I read the work of the person whose chamber I occupied, and on the strength of the compliment that had been paid me (imagining I had a taste for poetry) made my first essay in a cantata in praise of Madame de Bonac. This inclination was not permanent, though from time to time I have composed tolerable verses. I think it is a good exercise to teach elegant turns of expression, and to write well in prose, but could never find attractions enough in French poetry to give entirely in to it.

M. de la Martinière wished to see my style, and asked me to write the detail I had made before the ambassador; accordingly I wrote him a long letter, which I have since been informed was preserved by M. de Marianne, who had been long attached to the Marquis de Bonac, and has since succeeded M. de Martinière as secretary to the embassy of M. de Courtellies.

The experience I began to acquire tended to moderate my romantic projects: for example, I did not fall in love with Madame de Bonac, but also felt I did not stand much chance of succeeding in the service of her husband. M. de la Martinière was already in the only place that could have satisfied my ambition, and M. de Marianne in expectancy: thus my utmost hopes could only aspire to the office of under-secretary, which did not infinitely tempt me; this was the reason why, when consulted on the situation I should like to be placed in, I expressed a great desire to

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

go to Paris. The ambassador readily gave in to the idea, which at least tended to disembarass him of me. M. de Merveilleux, interpreting secretary to the embassy, said that his friend M. Godard, a Swiss colonel in the service of France, wanted a person to be with his nephew, who had entered very young into the service, and made no doubt that I should suit him. On this idea, so lightly formed, my departure was determined; and I, who saw a long journey to perform, with Paris at the end of it, was enraptured at the project. They gave me several letters, a hundred livres to defray the expenses of my journey, accompanied with some good advice, and thus equipped, I started.

I was a fortnight making the journey, which I may reckon among the happiest days of my life. I was young, in perfect health, with plenty of money, and the most brilliant hopes: added to this, I was on foot, and alone. It may appear strange I should mention the latter circumstances as advantageous, if my peculiarity of temper is not already apparent to the reader. I was continually occupied with a variety of pleasing chimeras, and never did the warmth of my imagination produce more magnificent ones. When offered an empty place in a carriage, or any person accosted me on the road, how vexed was I to see that fortune overthrown, whose edifice, while walking, I had taken such pains to rear.

For once, my ideas were all martial; I was going to live with a military man; nay, to become one, for it was concluded I should begin with being a cadet. I already fancied myself in regimentals, with a fine white feather nodding on my hat, and my heart was inflamed by the noble idea. I

## ON MYSELF

had some smattering of geometry and fortification; my uncle was an engineer; I was, in a manner, a soldier by inheritance. My short-sight, indeed, presented some little obstacle, but did not by any means discourage me, as I reckoned to supply that defect by coolness and intrepidity. I had read, too, that Marshal Schomberg was remarkably short-sighted, and why might not Marshal Rousseau be the same? My imagination was so warmed by these follies, that it presented nothing but troops, ramparts, gabions, batteries, and myself in the midst of fire and smoke, an eye-glass in hand, commanding with the utmost tranquillity. Notwithstanding, when the country presented a delightful prospect, when I saw charming groves and rivulets, the pleasing sight made me sigh with regret, and feel, in the midst of all glory, that my heart was not formed for such havoc; and soon, without knowing how, I found my thought wandering among my dear sheepfolds, renouncing for ever labours of Mars.

How much did Paris disappoint the idea I had formed of it! The exterior decorations I had seen at Turin, the beauty of the streets, the symmetry and regularity of the houses, contributed to this disappointment, since I concluded that Paris must be infinitely superior. I had figured to myself a splendid city, beautiful as large, of the most commanding aspect, whose streets were ranges of magnificent palaces, composed of marble and gold. On entering the Faubourg St. Marceau I saw nothing but dirty, stinking streets, filthy black houses, an air of slovenliness and poverty, beggars, carters, and butchers, and heard nothing but cries of diet, drink, and old hats. This struck me so forcibly, that all I have since seen of real magnificence in Paris could never erase this first

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

impression, which has ever given me a particular disgust to residing in that capital; and I may say, the whole time I remained there afterwards was employed in seeking resources which might enable me to live at a distance from it. This is the consequence of a too lively imagination, which exaggerates even beyond the voice of fame, and ever expects more than is told. I had heard Paris so flatteringly described, that I pictured it like the ancient Babylon, which, perhaps, had I seen, I might have found equally faulty, and unlike that idea the account had conveyed. The same thing happened at the Opera House, to which I hastened the day after my arrival. I was sensible of the same deficiency at Versailles, and sometime after on viewing the sea. I am convinced this would ever be the consequence of a too flattering description of any object; for it is impossible for man, and difficult even for nature herself, to surpass the riches of the imagination.

By the reception I met with from all those whom my letters were addressed, I thought my fortune was certainly made. The person who received me the least kindly was M. de Surbeck, to whom I had the warmest recommendation. He had retired from the service and lived philosophically at Bagneux, where I waited on him several times without his offering me even a glass of water. I was better received by Madame de Merveilleux, sister-in-law to the interpreter, and by his nephew, who was an officer in the Guards. The mother and son not only received me kindly, but offered me the use of their table which favour I frequently accepted during my stay at Paris.

Madame de Merveilleux appeared to have been handsome, her hair was of a fine black, which,

## ON MYSELF

according to the old mode, she wore curled on the temples. She still retained ( which do not perish with a set of features ) the beauties of an amiable mind. She appeared satisfied with mine and did all she could to render me service ; but no one seconded her endeavours, and I was presently undeceived in the great interest they had seemed to take in my affairs. I must, however, do the French nation the justice to say they exhaust themselves with protestations, as some have presented, and that appearing interested in your affairs which is more deceiving than words. The gross compliments of the Swiss can only impose upon fools ; the manners of the French are more seducing, and at the same time so simple, that you are persuaded they do not express all they mean to do for you, in order that you may be all the more agreeably surprised. I will say more : they are not false in their protestations, being naturally zealous to oblige, humane, benevolent, and even ( whatever may be said to the contrary ) more sincere than any other nation ; but they are too flighty : in effect, they feel the sentiments they profess for you, but that sentiment flies off as instantaneously as it was formed. In speaking to you, their whole attention is employed on you alone ; when absent, you are forgotten. Nothing is permanent in their hearts ; all is the work of the moment.

Thus I was greatly flattered, but received little service. Colonel Godard, for whose nephew I was recommended, proved to be an avaricious old wretch, who, on seeing my distress ( though he was immensely rich ), wished to have my services for nothing, meaning to place me with this nephew rather as a valet without wages than a tutor. He represented that as I was to be con-

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

tinually engaged with him, I should be excused from duty, and might live on my cadet's allowance; that is to say, on the pay of a soldier—hardly would he consent to give me a uniform, thinking the clothing of the army might serve. Madame de Marvilleux, provoked at these proposals, persuaded me not to accept them; her son was of the same opinion; something else was to be thought on, but no situation was procured. Meantime, I began to be necessitated; for the hundred livres with which I had commenced my journey could not last much longer. Happily I received a small remittance from the ambassador, which was very serviceable, nor do I think he would have abandoned me had I possessed more patience; but languishing, waiting, soliciting are to me impossible. I was disheartened, displeased and thus all my brilliant expectations came once more to nothing. I had not all this time forgotten my dear Madame de Warrens, but how was I to find her? Where should I seek her? Madame de Merveilleux, who knew my story, assisted me in the search, but for a long time unavailingly; at length, she informed me that Madame de Warrens had set out from Paris above two months before but it was not known whether for Savoy or Turin, and that some conjectured she was gone to Switzerland. Nothing further was necessary to fix my determination to follow her, certain that, wherever she might be, I stood more chance of finding her at those places than I could possibly do at Paris.

Before my departure, I exercised my new poetical talent in an epistle to Colonel Godard, whom I ridiculed to the utmost of my abilities. I showed this scribble to Madame de Merveilleux, who instead of discouraging me, as she ought to

## ON MYSELF

have done, laughed heartily at my sarcasms, as well as her son, who, I believe, did not like M. Godard; indeed, it must be confessed he was a man not calculated to obtain affection. I was tempted to send him my verses, and they encouraged me in it; accordingly, I made them up in a parcel directed to him, and there being no post then at Paris by which I could conveniently send it, I put it in my pocket, and sent it to him from Auxerre, as I passed through that place. I laugh even yet, sometimes, at the grimaces I fancy he made on reading this panegyric, where he was certainly drawn to the life. It began thus:—

Tu croyais, vieux Penard, qu'une folle manie  
D'élever ton neveu m'inspirerait l'envie.

This little piece, which, it is true, was not indifferently written, did not want for salt, and announced a turn for satire; it is, notwithstanding, the only satirical writing that ever came from my pen. I have too little hatred in my heart to take advantage of such a talent; but I believe it may be judged from those controversies in which from time to time I had been engaged in my own defence, that had I been of a vindictive disposition, my adversaries would rarely have the laughter on their side.

What I most regret is not having kept a journal of my travels, being conscious that a number of interesting details have slipped my memory; for never did I exist so completely, never live so thoroughly, never was so much myself, if I may dare to use the expression, as in those journeys made on foot. Walking animates and enlivens my spirits; I can hardly think when in a state of inactivity; my body must be exercised to make my judgment active. The view of a fine country,



## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

a succession of agreeable prospects, a free air, a good appetite, and the health I gain by walking; the freedom of inns, and the distance from everything that can make me recollect the dependence of my situation, conspire to free my soul, and give boldness to my thoughts, throwing me, in a manner, into the immensity of beings, where I combine, choose, and appropriate them to my fancy, without constraint or fear. I dispose of all nature as I please; my heart, wandering from object to object, approximates and unites with those that please it, is surrounded by charming images, and becomes intoxicated with delicious sensations. If, attempting to render these permanent, I am amused in describing them to myself, what glow of colouring, what energy of expression do I give them! It has been said that all these are to be found in my works, though written in the decline of life. Oh! had those of my early youth been seen, those made during my travels, composed, but never written! Why did I not write them? will be asked. And why should I have written them? I may answer. Why deprive myself of the actual charm of my enjoyments to inform others what I enjoyed? What to me were readers, the public, or all the world while I was mounting the empyrean? Besides, did I carry pens, paper, and ink with me? Had I recollected all these, not a thought would have occurred worth preserving. I do not foresee when I shall have ideas; they come when they please, and not when I call for them; either they avoid me altogether, or, rushing in crowds, overwhelm me with their force and number. Ten volumes a day would not suffice barely to enumerate my thoughts; how then should I find time to write them? In stopping, I thought of nothing but

## ON MYSELF

a hearty dinner ; on departing, of nothing but a charming walk ; I felt that a new paradise awaited me at the door, and eagerly leaped forward to enjoy it.

Never did I experience this so feelingly as in the perambulation I am now describing. On coming to Paris, I had confined myself to ideas which related to the situation I expected to occupy there. I had rushed into the career I was about to run, and should have completed it with tolerable éclat, but it was not that that my heart adhered to. Some real beings obscured my imagined ones. Colonel Godard and his nephew could not keep pace with a hero of my disposition. Thank Heaven, I was soon delivered from all these obstacles, and could enter at pleasure into the wilderness of chimeras, for that alone remained before me, and I wandered in it so completely that I several times lost my way ; but this was no misfortune. I would not have shortened it ; for feeling with regret, as I approached Lyons, that I must again return to the material world, I should have been glad never to have arrived there.

One day, among others, having purposely gone out of my way to take a nearer view of a spot that appeared delightful, I was so charmed with it, and wandered round it so often, that at length I completely lost myself and after several hours' useless walking, weary, fainting with hunger and thirst, I entered a peasant's hut which had not indeed a very promising appearance, but was the only one I could discover near me. I thought it was here, as at Geneva, or in Switzerland, where the inhabitants, living at ease, have it in their power to exercise hospitality. I entreated the countryman to give me some dinner, offering to pay for it : on

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

which he presented me with some skimmed milk and coarse barley-bread, saying it was all he had. I drank the milk with pleasure, and ate the bread, chaff and all; but it was not very restorative to a man sinking with fatigue. The countryman, who watched me narrowly, judged the truth of my story by my appetite, and presently (after having said that he plainly saw I was an honest, good-natured young man, and did not come to betray him) opened a little trap door by the side of his kitchen, went down, and returned a moment after with a good brown loaf of pure wheat, the remains of a well flavoured ham, and a bottle of wine, the sight of which rejoiced my heart more than all the rest. He then prepared a good thick omelet, and I made such a dinner as none but a walking traveller ever enjoyed.

When I again offered to pay, his inquietude and fears returned. He not only would have no money, but refused it with the most evident emotion; and, what made this scene more amusing, I could not imagine the motive of his fear. At length, he pronounced tremblingly those terrible words, 'Commissioners,' and 'Cellar-rats,' which he explained by giving me to understand that he concealed his wine because of the excise, and his bread on account of the tax imposed on it; adding, he should be an undone man if it was suspected he was not almost perishing with want. What he said to me on this subject (of which I had not the smallest idea) made an impression on my mind that can never be effaced, sowing seeds of that inextinguishable hatred which has since grown up in my heart, against the vexations these unhappy people suffer, and against their oppressors. This man, though in easy circumstances, dared not eat the bread

## ON MYSELF

gained by the sweat of his brow, and could only escape destruction by exhibiting an outward appearance of misery! I left his cottage with as much indignation as concern, deploring the fate of those beautiful countries, where nature has been prodigal of her gifts, only that they may become the prey of barbarous exactors.

.....  
These long details of my early youth must have appeared trifling, and I am sorry for it: though born a man in a variety of instances, I was long a child, and am so yet in many particulars. I did not promise the public a great personage. I promised to describe myself as I am; and to know me in my advanced age, it was necessary to have known me in my youth. As, in general, objects that are present make less impression on me than the bare remembrance of them (my ideas being all the recollection), the first traits which were engraven on my mind have distinctly remained: those which have since been imprinted there have rather combined with the former than effaced them. There is a certain, yet varied succession of affections and ideas, which continue to regulate those that follow them, and this progression must be known in order to judge rightly of those they have influenced. I have studied to develop the first causes, the better to show the concatenation of effects. I would be able by some means to render my soul transparent to the eyes of the reader and for this purpose endeavour to show it in every possible point of view, to give him every insight, and act in such a manner that not a motion should escape him, as by this means he may form a judgment of the principles that produce them.

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Did I take upon myself to decide, and say to the reader, 'Such is my character,' he might think that if I did not endeavour to deceive him, I at least deceived myself; but in recounting simply all that has happened to me, all my actions, thoughts, and feelings, I cannot lead him into an error, unless I do it wilfully, which by this means I could not easily effect, since it is his province to compare the elements, and judge of the being they compose: thus the result must be his work, and if he is then deceived, the error will be his own. It is not sufficient for this purpose that my recitals should be merely faithful, they must also be minute; it is not for me to judge of the importance of facts; I ought to declare them simply as they are, and leave the estimate that is to be formed of them to him. I have adhered to this principle hitherto with the most scrupulous exactitude, and shall not depart from it in the continuation; but the impressions of age are less lively than those of youth. I began by delineating the latter: should I recollect the rest with the same precision, the reader may, perhaps, become weary and impatient, but I shall not be dissatisfied with my labour. I have but one thing to apprehend in this undertaking; I do not dread saying too much, or advancing falsities, but I am fearful of not saying enough, or concealing truths.

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

My elder brothers were all put apprentices to different trades. I was put to the grammar-school at eight years of age, my father intending to devote me, as the tithe of his sons, to the service of the Church. My early readiness in learning to read (which must have been very early, as I do not remember when I could not read), and the opinion of all his friends, that I should certainly make a good scholar, encouraged him in this purpose of his. My uncle Benjamin, too, approved of it, and proposed to give me all his short-hand volumes of sermons, I suppose as a stock to set up with, if I would learn his character. I continued, however, at the grammar-school not quite one year, though in that time I had risen gradually from the middle of the class of that year to be the head of it, and farther was removed into the next class above it, in order to go with that into the third at the end of the year. But my father, in the meantime, from a view of the expense of a college education, which having so large a family he could not well afford, and the mean living many so educated were afterwards able to obtain—reasons that he gave to his friends in my hearing—altered his first intention, took me from the grammar-school, and sent me to a school for writing and arithmetic, kept by a then famous man, Mr. George Brownell, very successful in his profession generally, and that by mild, encouraging methods. Under him I acquired fair writing

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

pretty soon, but I failed in the arithmetic, and made no progress in it. At ten years old I was taken home to assist my father in his business, which was that of a tallow-chandler and soap-boiler; a business he was not bred to, but had assumed on his arrival in New England, and on finding his dying trade would not maintain his family, being in little request. Accordingly, I was employed in cutting wick for the candles, filling the dipping mold and the molds for cast candles, attending the shop, going of errands, etc.

I disliked the trade, and had a strong inclination for the sea, but my father declared against it; however, living near the water, I was much in and about it, learnt early to swim well, and to manage boats; and when in a boat or canoe with other boys, I was commonly allowed to govern, especially in any case of difficulty; and upon other occasions I was generally a leader among the boys, and sometimes led them into scrapes, of which I will mention one instance, as it shows an early projecting public spirit, tho' not then justly conducted.

There was a salt-marsh that bounded part of the mill-pond, on the edge of which, at high water, we used to stand to fish for minnows. By much trampling, we had made it a mere quagmire. My proposal was to build a wharf there fit for us to stand upon, and I showed my comrades a large heap of stones, which were intended for a new house near the marsh, and which would very well suit our purpose. Accordingly, in the evening, when the workmen were gone, I assembled a number of my play-fellows, and working with them diligently like so many emmets, sometimes two or three to a stone, we brought them all away

## ON MYSELF

and built our little wharf. The next morning the workmen were surprised at missing the stones, which were found in our wharf. Inquiry was made after the removers; we were discovered and complained of; several of us were corrected by our fathers; and, though I pleaded the usefulness of the work, mine convinced me that nothing was useful which was not honest.

I think you may like to know something of his person and character. He had an excellent constitution of body, was of middle stature, but well set, and very strong; he was ingenious, could draw prettily, was skilled a little in music, and had a clear pleasing voice, so that when he played psalm tunes on his violin and sung withal, as he sometimes did in an evening after the business of the day was over, it was extremely agreeable to hear. He had a mechanical genius too, and, on occasion, was very handy in the use of other tradesmen's tools; but his great excellence lay in a sound understanding and solid judgment in prudential matters, both in private and public affairs. In the latter, indeed, he was never employed, the numerous family he had to educate and the straitness of his circumstances keeping him close to his trade; but I remember well his being frequently visited by leading people, who consulted him for his opinion in affairs of the town or of the church he belonged to, and showed a good deal of respect for his judgment and advice: he was also much consulted by private persons about their affairs when any difficulty occurred, and frequently chosen an arbitrator between contending parties. At his table he liked to have, as often as he could, some sensible friend or neighbour to converse with, and always took care to start some ingenious or useful topic for dis-



## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

course. which might tend to improve the minds of his children. By this means he turned our attention to what was good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life ; and little or no notice was ever taken of what related to the victuals on the table, whether it was well or ill dressed, in or out of season, of good or bad flavour, preferable or inferior to this or that other thing of the kind, so that I was brought up in such a perfect inattention to those matters as to be quite indifferent what kind of food was set before me, and so unobservant of it, that to this day if I am asked I can scarce tell a few hours after dinner what I dined upon. This has been a convenience to me in travelling, where my companions have been sometimes very unhappy for want of a suitable gratification of their more delicate, because better instructed, tastes and appetites.

My mother had likewise an excellent constitution : she suckled all her ten children. I never knew either my father or mother to have any sickness but that of which they died, he at 89, and she at 85 years of age. They lie buried together at Boston, where I some years since placed a marble over their grave, with this inscription :

Josiah Franklin,  
and  
Abiah his wife,  
lie here interred.

They lived lovingly together in wedlock  
fifty-five years

Without an estate, or any gainful employment,  
By constant labor and industry,  
with God's blessing,  
They maintained a large family  
comfortably,  
and brought up thirteen children  
and seven grandchildren  
reputably.

## ON MYSELF

From this instance, reader,  
Be encouraged to diligence in thy calling,  
And distrust not Providence.

He was a pious and prudent man ;  
She, a discreet and virtuous woman.  
Their youngest son,  
In filial regard to their memory,  
Places this stone.

J.F. born 1655, died 1744, Ætat 89.

A.F. born 1667, died 1752, — 85.

By my rambling digressions I perceive myself to be grown old. I used to write more methodically. But one does not dress for private company as for a public ball. 'Tis perhaps only negligence.

To return : I continued thus employed in my father's business for two years, that is, till I was twelve years old ; and my brother John, who was bred to that business, having left my father, married, and set up for himself at Rhode Island, there was all appearance that I was destined to supply his place, and become a tallow-chandler. But my dislike to the trade continuing, my father was under apprehensions that if he did not find one for me more agreeable, I should break away and get to sea, as his son Josiah had done, to his great vexation. He therefore sometimes took me to walk with him, and see joiners, bricklayers, turners, braziers, etc., at their work, that he might observe my inclination, and endeavour to fix it on some trade or other on land. It has ever since been a pleasure to me to see good workmen handle their tools ; and it has been useful to me, having learnt so much by it as to be able to do little jobs myself in my house when a workman could not readily be got, and to construct little machines for my experiments, while the intention

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

of making the experiment was fresh and warm in my mind. My father at last fixed upon the cutler's trade, and my uncle Benjamin's son Samuel, who was bred to that business in London, being about that time established in Boston, I was sent to be with him some time on liking. But his expectations of a fee with me displeasing my father, I was taken home again.

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with the Pilgrim's Progress, my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes. I afterward sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton's Historical Collections; they were small chapmen's books, and cheap, 40 or 50 in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read, and have since often regretted that, at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way, since it was now resolved I should not be a clergyman. Plutarch's Lives there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of De Foe's, called an Essay on Projects, and another of Dr. Mather's, called Essays to do Good, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life.

This bookish inclination at length determined my father to make me a printer, though he had already one son (James) of that profession. In 1717 my brother James returned from England with a press and letters to set up his business in Boston. I liked it much better than that of my father, but still had a hankering for the sea. To prevent the apprehended effect of such an in-

## ON MYSELF

clination, my father was impatient to have me bound to my brother. I stood out some time, but at last was persuaded, and signed the indentures when I was yet but twelve years old. I was to serve as an apprentice till I was twenty-one years of age, only I was to be allowed journeyman's wages during the last year. In a little time I made great proficiency in the business, and became a useful hand to my brother. I now had access to better books. An acquaintance with the apprentices of booksellers enabled me sometimes to borrow a small one, which I was careful to return soon and clean. Often I sat up in my room reading the greatest part of the night, when the book was borrowed in the evening and to be returned early in the morning, lest it should be missed or wanted.

And after some time an ingenious tradesman, Mr. Matthew Adams, who had a pretty collection of books, and who frequented our printing-house, took notice of me, invited me to his library, and very kindly lent me such books as I chose to read. I now took a fancy to poetry, and made some little pieces; my brother, thinking it might turn to account, encouraged me, and put me on composing occasional ballads. One was called *The Lighthouse Tragedy*, and contained an account of the drowning of Captain Worthilake, with his two daughters: the other was a sailor's song, on the taking of *Teach* (or Blackbeard) the pirate. They were wretched stuff, in the Grub-street-ballad style; and when they were printed he sent me about the town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having made a great noise. This flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances, and telling me verse-

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

makers were generally beggars. So I escaped being a poet, most probably a very bad one; but as prose writing has been of great use to me in the course of my life, and was a principal means of my advancement, I shall tell you how, in such a situation, I acquired what little ability I have in that way.

There was another bookish lad in the town, John Collins by name, with whom I was intimately acquainted. We sometimes disputed, and very fond we were of argument, and very desirous of confuting one another, which disputatious turn, by the way, is apt to become a very bad habit, making people often extremely disagreeable in company by the contradiction that is necessary to bring it into practice; and thence, besides souring and spoiling the conversation, is productive of disgusts and, perhaps enmities where you may have occasion for friendship. I had caught it by reading my father's books of dispute about religion. Persons of good sense, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and men of all sorts that have been bred at Edinborough.

A question was once, somehow or other, started between Collins and me, of the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities for study. He was of opinion that it was improper, and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the contrary side, perhaps a little for dispute's sake. He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words, and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons. As we parted without settling the point, and were not to see one another again for some time, I sat down to put my arguments in writing, which I

## ON MYSELF

copied fair and sent to him. He answered, and I replied. Three or four letters of a side had passed, when my father happened to find my papers and read them. Without entering into the discussion, he took occasion to talk to me about the manner of my writing; observed that, though I had the advantage of my antagonist in correct spelling and pointing (which I owed to the printing-house), I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method and in perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. I saw the justice of his remarks, and thence grew more attentive to the manner in writing, and determined to endeavour at improvement.

About this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

variety in my mind, and make me master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavoured to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious. My time for these exercises and for reading was at night, after work or before it began in the morning, or on Sundays, when I contrived to be in the printing-house alone, evading as much as I could the common attendance on public worship which my father used to exact of me when I was under his care, and which indeed I still thought a duty, though I could not, as it seemed to me, afford time to practise it.

When about 16 years of age I happened to meet with a book, written by one Tryon, recommending a vegetable diet. I determined to go into it. My brother, being yet unmarried did not keep house, but boarded himself and his apprentices in another family. My refusing to eat flesh occasioned an inconveniency, and I was frequently chid for my singularity. I made myself acquainted with Tryon's manner of preparing some of his dishes, such as boiling potatoes or rice,

## ON MYSELF

making hasty pudding, and a few others, and then proposed to my brother, that if he would give me, weekly, half the money he paid for my board, I would board myself. He instantly agreed to it, and I presently found that I could save half what he paid me. This was an additional fund for buying books. But I had another advantage in it. My brother and the rest going from the printing-house to their meals, I remained there alone, and, despatching presently my light repast, which often was no more than a biscuit or a slice of bread, a handful of raisins or a tart from the pastry-cook's, and a glass of water, had the rest of the time till their return for study, in which I made the greater progress, from that greater clearness of head and quicker apprehension which usually attend temperance in eating and drinking.

And now it was that, being on some occasion made ashamed of my ignorance in figures, which I had twice failed in learning when at school, I took Cocker's book of Arithmetic, and went through the whole by myself with great ease. I also read Seller's and Shermy's books of Navigation, and became acquainted with the little geometry they contain; but never proceeded far in that science. And I read about\* this time Locke *On Human Understanding*, and the *Art of Thinking*, by Messrs. du Port Royal.

While I was intent on improving my language, I met with an English grammar (I think it was Greenwood's), at the end of which there were two little sketches of the arts of rhetoric and logic, the latter finishing with a specimen of a dispute in the Socratic method; and soon after I procured Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates*, wherein there are many instances of the same method. I was charmed with it, adopted it, dropt my



## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter. And being then, from reading Shaftesbury and Collins, become a real doubter in many points of our religious doctrine, I found this method safest for myself and very embarrassing to those against whom I used it; therefore I took a delight in it, practised it continually, and grew very artful and expert in drawing people, even of superior knowledge, into concessions, the consequences of which they did not foresee, entangling them in difficulties out of which they could not extricate themselves, and so obtaining victories that neither myself nor my cause always deserved. I continued this method some few years, but gradually left it, retaining only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence; never using, when I advanced any thing that may possibly be disputed, the words *certainly, undoubtedly*, or any others that give the air of positiveness to an opinion; but rather say, I conceive or apprehend a thing to be so and so; it appears to me, or *I should think it so or so*, for such and such reasons; or *I imagine it to be so*; or *it is so, if I am not mistaken*. This habit, I believe, has been of great advantage to me when I have had occasion to inculcate my opinions, and persuade men into measures that I have been from time to time engaged in promoting; and, as the chief ends of conversation are to *inform* or to be *informed*, to *please* or to *persuade*, I wish well-meaning, sensible men would not lessen their power of doing good by a positive, assuming manner, that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition, and to defeat everyone of those purposes for which speech was given to us, to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure. For,

## ON MYSELF

if you would inform, a positive and dogmatical manner in advancing your sentiments may provoke contradiction and prevent a candid attention. If you wish information and improvement from the knowledge of others, and yet at the same time express yourself as firmly fixed in your present opinions, modest, sensible men, who do not love disputation, will probably leave you undisturbed in the possession of your error. And by such a manner, you can seldom hope to recommend yourself in *pleasing* your hearers, or to persuade those whose concurrence you desire. Pope says, judiciously :

*' Men should be taught as if you taught them not,  
And things unknown propos'd as things forgot ; '*

farther recommending to us

*' To speak, tho' sure, with seeming diffidence. '*

And he might have coupled with this line that which he has coupled with another, I think, less properly,

*' For want of modesty is want of sense. '*

If you ask, Why less properly ? I must repeat the lines,

*' Immodest words admit of no defense,  
For want of modesty is want of sense. '*

Now, is not *want of sense* ( where a man is so unfortunate as to want it ) some apology for his *want of modesty* ? and would not the lines stand more justly thus ?

*' Immodest words admit but this defense,  
That want of modesty is want of sense. '*

This however, I should submit to better judgments.

My brother had, in 1720 or 1721, begun to print

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

a newspaper. It was the second that appeared in America, and was called the New England Courant. The only one before it was the Boston News-Letter. I remember his being dissuaded by some of his friends from the undertaking, as not likely to succeed, one newspaper being, in their judgment, enough for America. At this time (1771) there are not less than five-and-twenty. He went on, however, with the undertaking, and after having worked in composing the types and printing off the sheets, I was employed to carry the papers through the streets to the customers.

He had some ingenious men among his friends, who amused themselves by writing little pieces for this paper, which gained it credit and made it more in demand, and these gentlemen often visited us. Hearing their conversations, and their accounts of the approbation their papers were received with, I was excited to try my hand among them; but, being still a boy, and suspecting that my brother would object to printing anything of mine in his paper if he knew it to be mine, I contrived to disguise my hand, and, writing an anonymous paper, I put it in at night under the door of the printing-house. It was found in the morning, and communicated to his writing friends when they called in as usual. They read it, commented on it in my hearing, and I had the exquisite pleasure of finding it met with their approbation, and that, in their different guesses at the author, none were named but men of some character among us for learning and ingenuity. I suppose now that I was rather lucky in my judges, and that perhaps they were not really so very good ones as I then esteemed them.

## ON MYSELF

Encouraged, however, by this, I wrote and conveyed in the same way to the press several more papers which were equally approved; and I kept my secret till my small fund of sense for such performances was pretty well exhausted, and then I discovered it, when I began to be considered a little more by my brother's acquaintance, and in a manner that did not quite please him, as he thought, probably with reason, that it tended to make me too vain. And, perhaps, this might be one occasion of the differences that we began to have about this time. Though a brother, he considered himself as my master, and me as his apprentice, and, accordingly, expected the same services from me as he would from another, while I thought he demeaned me too much in some he required of me, who from a brother expected more indulgence. Our disputes were often brought before our father, and I fancy I was either generally in the right, or else a better pleader, because the judgment was generally in my favour. But my brother was passionate, and had often beaten me, which I took extremely amiss; and, thinking my apprenticeship very tedious, I was continually wishing for some opportunity of shortening it, which at length offered in a manner unexpected.

One of the pieces in our newspaper on some political point, which I have now forgotten, gave offence to the Assembly. He was taken up, censured, and imprisoned for a month, by the speaker's warrant, I suppose, because he would not discover his author. I too was taken up and examined before the council; but, though I did not give them any satisfaction, they contented themselves with admonishing me, and dismissed me, considering me, perhaps, as an

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

apprentice, who was bound to keep his master's secrets.

During my brother's confinement, which I resented a good deal, notwithstanding our private differences, I had the management of the paper; and I made bold to give our rulers some rubs in it, which my brother took very kindly, while others began to consider me in an unfavourable light, as a young genius that had a turn for libelling and satire. My brother's discharge was accompanied with an order of the House (a very odd one), that '*James Franklin should no longer print the paper called the New England Courant.*'

There was a consultation held in our printing-house among his friends, what he should do in this case. Some proposed to evade the order by changing the name of the paper; but my brother, seeing inconveniences in that, it was finally concluded on as a better way, to let it be printed for the future under the name of BENJAMIN FRANKLIN; and to avoid the censure of the Assembly, that might fall on him as still printing it by his apprentice, the contrivance was that my old indenture should be returned to me, with a full discharge on the back of it, to be shown on occasion, but to secure to him the benefit of my service, I was to sign new indentures for the remainder of the term, which were to be kept private. A very flimsy scheme it was; however, it was immediately executed, and the paper went on accordingly, under my name for several months.

At length, a fresh difference arising between my brother and me, I took upon me to assert my freedom, presuming that he would not venture to produce the new indentures. It was not fair in me to take this advantage, and this I therefore reckon one of the first errata of my life; but the

## ON MYSELF

unfairness of it weighed little with me, when under the impressions of resentment for the blows his passion too often urged him to bestow upon me, though he was otherwise not an ill-natured man: perhaps I was too saucy and provoking.

When he found I would leave him, he took care to prevent my getting employment in any other printing-house of the town, by going round and speaking to every master, who accordingly refused to give me work. I then thought of going to New York, as the nearest place where there was a printer; and I was rather inclined to leave Boston when I reflected that I had already made myself a little obnoxious to the governing party, and, from the arbitrary proceedings of the Assembly in my brother's case, it was likely I might, if I stayed, soon bring myself into scrapes; and farther, that my indiscreet disputations about religion began to make me pointed at with horror by good people as an infidel or atheist. I determined on the point, but my father now siding with my brother, I was sensible that, if I attempted to go openly, means would be used to prevent me. My friend Collins, therefore, undertook to manage a little for me. He agreed with the captain of a New York sloop for my passage, under the notion of my being a young acquaintance of his, that had got a naughty girl with child, whose friends would compel me to marry her, and therefore I could not appear or come away publicly. So I sold some of my books to raise a little money, was taken on board privately, and as we had a fair wind, in three days I found myself in New York, near 300 miles from home, a boy of but 17, without the least recommendation to, or knowledge of any person in the place, and with very little money in my pocket.

## EDWARD GIBBON

From my early acquaintance with Lausanne I had always cherished a secret wish that the school of my youth might become the retreat of my declining age. A moderate fortune would secure the blessings of ease, leisure, and independence: the country, the people, the manners, the language, were congenial to my taste; and I might indulge the hope of passing some years in the domestic society of a friend. After travelling with several English, Mr. Deyverdun was now settled at home, in a pleasant habitation, the gift of his deceased aunt: we had long been separated, we had long been silent; yet in my first letter I exposed, with the most perfect confidence, my situation, my sentiments, and my designs. His immediate answer was a warm and joyful acceptance: the picture of our future life provoked my impatience; and the terms of arrangement were short and simple, as he possessed the property, and I undertook the expense of our common house. Before I could break my English chain, it was incumbent on me to struggle with the feelings of my heart, the indolence of my temper, and the opinion of the world, which unanimously condemned this voluntary banishment. In the disposal of my effects, the library, a sacred deposit, was alone excepted. As my post-chaise moved over Westminster Bridge, I bade a long farewell to the '*fumum et opes strepitumque Romae*'. My journey by the direct road through France was not attended with any accident, and I arrived at Lausanne nearly twenty

## ON MYSELF

years after my second departure. Within less than three months the coalition struck on some hidden rocks : had I remained on board, I should have perished in the general shipwreck.

Since my establishment at Lausanne, more than seven years have elapsed ; and if every day has not been equally soft and serene, not a day, not a moment, has occurred in which I have repented of my choice. During my absence, a long portion of human life, many changes had happened : my elder acquaintance had left the stage ; virgins were ripened into matrons, and children were grown to the age of manhood. But the same manners were transmitted from one generation to another : my friend alone was an inestimable treasure ; my name was not totally forgotten, and all were ambitious to welcome the arrival of a stranger and the return of a fellow-citizen. The first winter was given to a general embrace, without any nice discrimination of persons and characters. After a more regular settlement, a more accurate survey, I discovered three solid and permanent benefits of my new situation. (1) My personal freedom had been somewhat impaired by the House of Commons and the Board of Trade ; but I was now delivered from the chain of duty and dependence, from the hopes and fears of political adventure : my sober mind was no longer intoxicated by the fumes of party, and I rejoiced in my escape, as often as I read of the midnight debates which preceded the dissolution of parliament. (2) My English economy had been that of a solitary bachelor, who might afford some occasional dinners. In Switzerland I enjoyed at every meal, at every hour, the free and pleasant conversation of the friend of my youth ; and my daily table was always provided for the



## EDWARD GIBBON

reception of one or two extraordinary guests. Our importance in society is less a positive than a relative weight: in London I was lost in the crowd; I ranked with the first families of Lausanne, and my style of prudent expense enabled me to maintain a fair balance of reciprocal civilities. (3) Instead of a small house between a street and a stable-yard, I began to occupy a spacious and convenient mansion, connected on the north side with the city, and open on the south to a beautiful and boundless horizon. A garden of four acres had been laid out by the taste of Mr. Deyverdun: from the garden a rich scenery of meadows and vineyards descends to the *Leman Lake*, and the prospect far beyond the Lake is crowned by the stupendous mountains of Savoy. My books and my acquaintance had been first united in London; but this happy position of my library in town and country was finally reserved for Lausanne. Possessed of every comfort in this triple alliance, I could not be tempted to change my habitation with the changes of the seasons.

My friends had been kindly apprehensive that I should not be able to exist in a Swiss town at the foot of the Alps, after having so long conversed with the first men of the first cities of the world. Such lofty connexions may attract the curious, and gratify the vain; but I am too modest, or too proud, to rate my own value by that of my associates; and whatsoever may be the fame of learning or genius, experience has shown me that the cheaper qualifications of politeness and good sense are of more useful currency in the commerce of life. By many, conversation is esteemed as a theatre or a school: but after the morning has been occupied by the labours of the library, I

## ON MYSELF

wish to unbend rather than to exercise my mind ; and in the interval between tea and supper I am far from disdaining the innocent amusement of a game at cards. Lausanne is peopled by a numerous gentry, whose companionable idleness is seldom disturbed by the pursuits of avarice or ambition : the women, though confined to a domestic education, are endowed for the most part with more taste and knowledge than their husbands and brothers : but the decent freedom of both sexes is equally remote from the extremes of simplicity and refinement. I shall add as a misfortune rather than a merit, that the situation and beauty of the Pays de Vaud, the long habits of the English, the medical reputation of Dr. Tissot, and the fashion of viewing the mountains and *Glaciers*, have opened us on all sides to the incursions of foreigners. The visits of Mr. and Madame Necker, of Prince Henry of Prussia, and of Mr. Fox, may form some pleasing exceptions ; but, in general, Lausanne has appeared most agreeable in my eyes, when we have been abandoned to our own society. I had frequently seen Mr. Necker, in the summer of 1784, at a country house near Lausanne, where he composed his Treatise on the Administration of the Finances. I have since, in October, 1790, visited him in his present residence, the castle and barony of Copet, near Geneva. Of the merits and measures of that statesman various opinions may be entertained ; but all impartial men must agree in their esteem of his integrity and patriotism.

In the month of August, 1784, Prince Henry of Prussia, in his way to Paris, passed three days at Lausanne. His military conduct has been praised by professional men ; his character has been vilified by the wit and malice of a demon ; but I

## EDWARD GIBBON

was flattered by his affability, and entertained by his conversation.

In his tour to Switzerland (September, 1788) Mr. Fox gave me two days of free and private society. He seemed to feel, and even to envy, the happiness of my situation; while I admired the powers of a superior man, as they are blended in his attractive character with the softness and simplicity of a child. Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempt from the taint of malevolence, vanity, or falsehood.

My transmigration from London to Lausanne could not be effected without interrupting the course of my historical labours. The hurry of my departure, the joy of my arrival, the delay of my tools, suspended their progress; and a full twelve-month was lost before I could resume the thread of regular and daily industry. A number of books most requisite and least common had been previously selected; the academical library of Lausanne, which I could use as my own, contained at least the fathers and councils; and I have derived some occasional succour from the public collections of Berne and Geneva. The fourth volume was soon terminated, by an abstract of the controversies of the Incarnation, which the learned Dr. Prideaux was apprehensive of exposing to profane eyes. It had been the original design of the learned Dean Prideaux to write the history of the ruin of the Eastern Church. In this work it would have been necessary, not only to unravel all those controversies which the Christians made about the hypostatical union, but also to unfold all the niceties and subtle notions which each sect entertained concerning it. The pious historian was apprehensive of exposing that incomprehensible mystery to the

## ON MYSELF

cavils and objections of unbelievers; and he durst not, 'seeing the nature of this book, venture it abroad in so wanton and lewd an age'.

In the fifth and sixth volumes the revolutions of the empire and the world are most rapid, various, and instructive; and the Greek or Roman historians are checked by the hostile narratives of the barbarians of the East and the West.

It was not till after many designs, and many trials, that I preferred, as I still prefer, the method of grouping my picture by nations; and the seeming neglect of chronological order is surely compensated by the superior merits of interest and perspicuity. The style of the first volume is, in my opinion, somewhat crude and elaborate; in the second and third it is ripened into ease, correctness, and numbers; but in the three last I may have been seduced by the facility of my pen, and the constant habit of speaking one language and writing another may have infused some mixture of Gallic idioms. Happily for my eyes, I have always closed my studies with the day, and commonly with the morning; and a long, but temperate, labour has been accomplished, without fatiguing either the mind or body; but when I computed the remainder of my time and my task, it was apparent that, according to the season of publication, the delay of a month would be productive of that of a year. I was now straining for the goal, and in the last winter many evenings were borrowed from the social pleasures of Lausanne. I could now wish that a pause, an interval, had been allowed for a serious revisal.

I have presumed to mark the moment of conception: I shall now commemorate the hour of my final deliverance. It was on the day, or

## EDWARD GIBBON

rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future date of my *History*, the life of the historian must be short and precarious. I will add two facts, which have seldom occurred in the composition of six, or at least of five quartos. (1) My first rough manuscript, without any intermediate copy, has been sent to the press. (2) Not a sheet has been seen by any human eyes, excepting those of the author and the printer: the faults and the merits are exclusively my own.

I cannot help recollecting a much more extraordinary fact, which is affirmed of himself by Retif de la Bretonne, a voluminous and original writer of French novels. He laboured, and may still labour, in the humble office of corrector to a printing-house; but this office enabled him to transport an entire volume from his mind to the press; and his work was given to the public without ever having been written by the pen.

After a quiet residence of four years, during which I had never moved ten miles from Lausanne, it was not without some reluctance and terror

## ON MYSELF

that I undertook, in a journey of two hundred leagues, to cross the mountains and the sea. Yet this formidable adventure was achieved without danger or fatigue; and at the end of a fortnight I found myself in Lord Sheffield's house and library, safe, happy, and at home. The character of my friend (Mr. Holroyd) had recommended him to a seat in parliament for Coventry, the command of a regiment of light dragoons, and an Irish peerage. The sense and spirit of his political writings have decided the public opinion on the great questions of our commercial interest with America and Ireland.

The sale of his *Observations on the American States* was diffusive, their effect beneficial; the Navigation Act, the palladium of Britain, was defended, and perhaps saved, by his pen; and he proves, by the weight of fact and argument, that the mother-country may survive and flourish after the loss of America. My friend has never cultivated the arts of composition; but his materials are copious and correct, and he leaves on his paper the clear impression of an active and vigorous mind. His *Observations on the Trade, Manufactures, and present State of Ireland*, were intended to guide the industry, to correct the prejudices, and to assuage the passions of a country which seemed to forget that she could be free and prosperous only by a friendly connexion with Great Britain. The concluding observations are written with so much ease and spirit that they may be read by those who are the least interested in the subject.

He fell (in 1784) with the unpopular coalition; but his merit has been acknowledged at the last general election, 1790, by the honourable invitation and free choice of the city of Bristol.

## EDWARD GIBBON

During the whole time of my residence in England, I was entertained at Sheffield Place and in Downing Street, by his hospitable kindness: and the most pleasant period was that which I passed in the domestic society of the family. In the larger circle of the metropolis I observed the country and the inhabitants with the knowledge, and without the prejudices, of an Englishman; but I rejoiced in the apparent increase of wealth and prosperity, which might be fairly divided between the spirit of the nation and the wisdom of the minister. All party-resentment was now lost in oblivion; since I was no man's rival, no man was my enemy. I felt the dignity of independence, and as I asked no more, I was satisfied with the general civilities of the world. The house in London which I frequented with most pleasure and assiduity was that of Lord North. After the loss of power and of sight, he was still happy in himself and his friends, and my public tribute of gratitude and esteem could no longer be suspected of any interested motive. Before my departure from England, I was present at the august spectacle of Mr. Hastings's trial in Westminster Hall. It is not my province to absolve or condemn the Governor of India; but Mr. Sheridan's eloquence commanded my applause; nor could I hear without emotion the personal compliment which he paid me in the presence of the British nation.

From this display of genius, which blazed four successive days, I shall stoop to a very mechanical circumstance. As I was waiting in the manager's box, I had the curiosity to inquire of the shorthand writer, how many words a ready and rapid orator might pronounce in an hour? From 7,000 to 7,500 was his answer. The medium

## ON MYSELF

of 7,200 will afford 120 words in a minute, and two words in each second. But this computation will only apply to the English language.

As the publication of my three last volumes was the principal object, so it was the first care of my English journey. The previous arrangements with the bookseller and the printer were settled in my passage through London, and the proofs, which I returned more correct, were transmitted every post from the press to Sheffield Place. The length of the operation, and the leisure of the country, allowed some time to review my manuscript. Several rare and useful books, the *Assises de Jerusalem*, *Ramusius de Bello C. Paro*, the *Greek Acts of the Synod of Florence*, the *Statuta Urbis Romae*, &c., were procured, and I introduced in their proper places the supplements which they afforded. The impression of the fourth volume had consumed three months. Our common interest required that we should move with a quicker pace; and Mr. Strahan fulfilled his engagement, which few printers could sustain, of delivering every week three thousand copies of nine sheets. The day of publication was, however, delayed, that it might coincide with the fifty-first anniversary of my own birthday; the double festival was celebrated by a 'cheerful literary dinner at Mr. Cadell's house; and I seemed to blush while they read an elegant compliment from Mr. Hayley, whose poetical talents had more than once been employed in the praise of his friend. Before Mr. Hayley inscribed with my name his epistles on history, I was not acquainted with that amiable man and elegant poet. He afterwards thanked me in verse for my second and third volumes; and in the summer of 1781, the Roman Eagle (a proud title)



## EDWARD GIBBON

accepted the invitation of the English Sparrow, who chirped in the groves of Eartham, near Chichester. As most of the former purchasers were naturally desirous of completing their sets, the sale of the quarto edition was quick and easy ; and an octavo size was printed to satisfy at a cheaper rate the public demand. The conclusion of my work was generally read, and variously judged. The style has been exposed to much academical criticism ; a religious clamour was revived, and the reproach of indecency has been loudly echoed by the rigid censors of morals. I never could understand the clamour that has been raised against the indecency of my three last volumes. (1) An equal degree of freedom in the former part, especially in the first volume, had passed without reproach. (2) I am justified in painting the manners of the times ; the vices of Theodora form an essential feature in the reign and character of Justinian ; and the most naked tale in my history is told by the Rev. Mr. Joseph Warton, an instructor of youth (*Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, pp. 322-4). (3) My English text is chaste, and all licentious passages are left in the obscurity of a learned language. *Le Latin dans ses mots brave l'honnêteté*, says the correct Boileau, in a country and idiom more scrupulous than our own. Yet, upon the whole, the *History of the Decline and Fall* seems to have struck root, both at home and abroad, and may, perhaps, a hundred years hence still continue to be abused. I am less flattered by Mr. Porson's high encomium on the style and spirit of my history, than I am satisfied with his honourable testimony to my attention, diligence, and accuracy ; those humble virtues, which religious zeal had most audaciously denied. The sweetness of his praise

## ON MYSELF

is tempered by a reasonable mixture of acid.

.....  
The French, Italian, and German translations have been executed with various success; but, instead of patronizing, I should willingly suppress such imperfect copies, which injure the character, while they propagate the name of the author. The first volume had been feebly, though faithfully, translated into French by M. Le Clerc de Septchenes, a young gentleman of a studious character and liberal fortune. After his decease the work was continued by two manufacturers of Paris, MM. Desmuniers and Cantwell: but the former is now an active member of the National Assembly, and the undertaking languishes in the hands of his associate. The superior merit of the interpreter, or his language, inclines me to prefer the Italian version: but I wish that it were in my power to read the German, which is praised by the best judges. The Irish pirates are at once my friends and my enemies. But I cannot be displeased with the too numerous and correct impressions which have been published for the use of the Continent at Basil in Switzerland. The conquests of our language and literature are not confined to Europe alone, and a writer who succeeds in London is speedily read on the banks of the Delaware and the Ganges.

In the preface of the fourth volume, while I gloried in the name of an Englishman, I announced my approaching return to the neighbourhood of the Lake of Lausanne. This last trial confirmed my assurance that I had wisely chosen for my own happiness; nor did I once, in a year's visit, entertain a wish of settling in my native country. Britain is the free and fortunate island; but where is the spot in which I could unite the com-

## EDWARD GIBBON

forts and beauties of my establishment at Lausanne? The tumult of London astonished my eyes and ears; the amusements of public places were no longer adequate to the trouble; the clubs and assemblies were filled with new faces and young men; and our best society our long and late dinners, would soon have been prejudicial to my health. Without any share in the political wheel, I must be idle and insignificant: yet the most splendid temptations would not have enticed me to engage a second time in the servitude of Parliament or office. At Tunbridge, some weeks after the publication of my *History*, I reluctantly quitted Lord and Lady Sheffield, and, with a young Swiss friend, whom I had introduced to the English world, I pursued the road of Dover and Lausanne. My habitation was embellished in my absence, and the last division of books, which followed my steps, increased my chosen library to the number of between six and seven thousand volumes. My seraglio was ample, my choice was free, my appetite was keen. After a full repast on Homer and Aristophanes, I involved myself in the philosophic maze of the writings of Plato, of which the dramatic is, perhaps, more interesting than the argumentative part: but I stepped aside into every path of inquiry which reading or reflection accidentally opened.

Alas! the joy of my return, and my studious ardour, were soon damped by the melancholy state of my friend Mr. Deyverdun. His health and spirits had long suffered a gradual decline, a succession of apoplectic fits announced his dissolution, and before he expired, those who loved him could not wish for the continuance of his life. The voice of reason might congratulate his deli-

## ON MYSELF

verance, but the feelings of nature and friendship could be subdued only by time: his amiable character was still alive in my remembrance; each room, each walk, was imprinted with our common footsteps; and I should blush at my own philosophy, if a long interval of study had not preceded and followed the death of my friend. By his last will he left to me the option of purchasing his house and garden, or of possessing them during my life, on the payment either of a stipulated price, or of an easy retribution to his kinsman and heir. I should probably have been tempted by the demon of property, if some legal difficulties had not been started against my title; a contest would have been vexatious, doubtful, and invidious; and the heir most gratefully subscribed an agreement, which rendered my life-possession more perfect, and his future condition more advantageous. Yet I had often revolved the judicious lines in which Pope answers the objections of his long-sighted friend:

Pity to build without or child or wife;  
Why, you'll enjoy it only all your life:  
Well, if the use be mine, does it concern one,  
Whether the name belong to Pope or Vernon?

The certainty of my tenure has allowed me to lay out a considerable sum in improvements and alterations: they have been executed with skill and taste; and few men of letters, perhaps, in Europe, are so desirably lodged as myself. But I feel, and with the decline of years I shall more painfully feel, that I am alone in paradise. Among the circle of my acquaintance at Lausanne, I have gradually acquired the solid and tender friendship of a respectable family; the four persons of whom it is composed are all endowed with the virtues best adapted to their

## EDWARD GIBBON

age and situation ; and I am encouraged to love the parents as a brother, and the children as a father. Every day we seek and find the opportunities of meeting : yet even this valuable connexion cannot supply the loss of domestic society.

Within the last two or three years our tranquillity has been clouded by the disorders of France ; many families at Lausanne were alarmed and affected by the terrors of an impending bankruptcy ; but the revolution, or rather the dissolution of the kingdom, has been heard and felt in the adjacent lands.

I beg leave to subscribe my assent to Mr. Burke's creed on the revolution of France. I admire his eloquence, I approve his politics, I adore his chivalry, and I can almost excuse his reverence for church establishments. I have sometimes thought of writing a dialogue of the dead, in which Lucian, Erasmus, and Voltaire should mutually acknowledge the danger of exposing an old superstition to the contempt of the blind and fanatic multitude.

A swarm of emigrants of both sexes, who escaped from the public ruin, has been attracted by the vicinity, the manners, and the language of Lausanne ; and our narrow habitations in town and country are now occupied by the first names and titles of the departed monarchy. These noble fugitives are entitled to our pity ; they may claim our esteem, but they cannot, in their present state of mind and fortune, much contribute to our amusement. Instead of looking down as calm and idle spectators on the theatre of Europe, our domestic harmony is somewhat embittered by the infusion of party spirit : our ladies and gentlemen assume the character of self-taught politicians ; and the sober dictates of wisdom and

## ON MYSELF

experience are silenced by the clamour of the triumphant *democrates*. The fanatic missionaries of sedition have scattered the seeds of discontent in our cities and villages, which have flourished above two hundred and fifty years without fearing the approach of war or feeling the weight of government. Many individuals, and some communities, appear to be infected with the Gallic frenzy, the wild theories of equal and boundless freedom ; but I trust that the body of the people will be faithful to their sovereign and to themselves ; and I am satisfied that the failure or success of a revolt would equally terminate in the ruin of the country. While the aristocracy of Berne protects the happiness, it is superfluous to inquire whether it be founded in the rights of man : the economy of the State is liberally supplied without the aid of taxes ; and the magistrates *must* reign with prudence and equity, since they are unarmed in the midst of an armed nation.

The revenue of Berne, excepting some small duties, is derived from church lands, tithes, feudal rights, and interest of money. The republic has nearly £500,000 sterling in the English funds, and the amount of their treasure is unknown to the citizens themselves. For myself (may the omen be averted !) I can only declare that the first stroke of a rebel drum would be the signal of my immediate departure.

When I contemplate the common lot of mortality, I must acknowledge that I have drawn a high prize in the lottery of life. The far greater part of the globe is overspread with barbarism or slavery : in the civilized world, the most numerous class is condemned to ignorance and poverty ; and the double fortune of my birth in a free and enlightened country, in an honourable and wealthy

## EDWARD GIBBON

family, is the lucky chance of an unit against millions. The general probability is about three to one that a new-born infant will not live to complete his fiftieth year. I have now passed that age, and may fairly estimate the present value of my existence in the threefold division of mind, body, and estate.

(1) The first and indispensable requisite of happiness is a clear conscience, unsullied by the reproach or remembrance of an unworthy action.

Hic murus aheneus esto,  
Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa.

I am endowed with a cheerful temper, a moderate sensibility, and a natural disposition to repose rather than to activity : some mischievous appetites and habits have perhaps been corrected by philosophy or time. The love of study, a passion which derives fresh vigour from enjoyment, supplied each day, each hour, with a perpetual source of independent and rational pleasure ; and I am not sensible of any decay of the mental faculties. The original soil has been highly improved by cultivation ; but it may be questioned whether some flowers of fancy, some grateful errors, have not been eradicated with the weeds of prejudice.

(2) Since I have escaped from the long perils of my childhood, the serious advice of a physician has seldom been requisite. 'The madness of superfluous health' I have never known, but my tender constitution has been fortified by time, and the inestimable gift of the sound and peaceful slumbers of infancy may be imputed both to the mind and body. (3) I have already described the merits of my society and situation ; but these enjoyments would be tasteless or bitter if their possession were not assured by an annual and

## ON MYSELF

adequate supply. According to the scale of Switzerland, I am a rich man; and I am indeed rich, since my income is superior to my expense, and my expense is equal to my wishes. My friend Lord Sheffield has kindly relieved me from the cares to which my taste and temper are most adverse: shall I add, that since the failure of my first wishes, I have never entertained any serious thoughts of a matrimonial connexion?

I am disgusted with the affectation of men of letters, who complain that they have renounced a substance for a shadow, and that their fame (which sometimes is no insupportable weight) affords a poor compensation for envy, censure, and persecution. My own experience, at least, has taught me a very different lesson; twenty happy years have been animated by the labour of my *History*, and its success has given me a name, a rank, a character, in the world, to which I should not otherwise have been entitled. The freedom of my writings has indeed provoked an implacable tribe; but, as I was safe from the stings, I was soon accustomed to the buzzing of the hornets: my nerves are not tremblingly alive, and my literary temper is so happily framed, that I am less sensible of pain than of pleasure. The rational pride of an author may be offended, rather than flattered, by vague indiscriminate praise; but he cannot, he should not, be indifferent to the fair testimonies of private and public esteem. Even his moral sympathy may be gratified by the idea, that now, in the present hour, he is imparting some degree of amusement or knowledge to his friends in a distant land; that one day his mind will be familiar to the grandchildren of those who are yet unborn. I cannot boast of the friendship or favour of princes; the



## EDWARD GIBBON

patronage of English literature has long since been devolved on our booksellers, and the measure of their liberality is the least ambiguous test of our common success. Perhaps the golden mediocrity of my fortune has contributed to fortify my application.

The present is a fleeting moment, the past is no more: and our prospect of futurity is dark and doubtful. This day may *possibly* be my last: but the laws of probability, so true in general, so fallacious in particular, still allow about fifteen years. I shall soon enter into the period which, as the most agreeable of his long life, was selected by the judgement and experience of the sage Fontenelle. His choice is approved by the eloquent historian of nature, who fixes our moral happiness to the mature season in which our passions are supposed to be calmed, our duties fulfilled, our ambition satisfied, our fame and fortune established on a solid basis. In private conversation, that great and amiable man added the weight of his own experience; and this autumnal felicity might be exemplified in the lives of Voltaire, Hume and many other men of letters. I am far more inclined to embrace than to dispute this comfortable doctrine. I will not suppose any premature decay of the mind or body; but I must reluctantly observe that two causes, the abbreviation of time, and the failure of hope, will always tinge with a browner shade the evening of life.

## J. W. VON GOETHE

Just as a man embraces the determination to become a soldier and go to the wars, and courageously resolves to bear danger and difficulties as well as to endure wounds and pain, and even death, but at the same time never actually realizes the particular occasions in which those vaguely anticipated evils may come upon him as an extremely unpleasant surprise,—so it is with everyone who ventures into the world, and especially with an author ; and so it was with me. As the public in general is more interested in the subject-matter than in the treatment of it, it was generally the subject of my plays which drew the sympathy of my younger readers. They thought they could see in them a banner, under whose guidance they might find a vent for all the wildness and crudeness of their youthful impulses, and it was the most able of them, men who had already entertained similar purposes, who were thus carried away. I still possess a letter—I do not know to whom addressed—from Bürger, a great and in many respects unique man, which may serve as important evidence of the effect and excitement produced by the publication of the piece. On the other side, sober-minded men blamed me for painting club-law in such favourable colours, and even attributed to me a desire to see those disorderly times restored again. Others took me for a man of profound learning, and wished me to publish a new annotated edition of Götz's original narrative;—a task for which I felt by no means fitted, although I allowed my name to be put on

## GOETHE

the title-page of the new edition. Because I had selected the best blooms in the wide field of his life, they took me for a careful gardener. However, this learning and profound knowledge of mine were much disputed by others. A respected business man quite unexpectedly paid me a visit. I felt highly honoured, especially as he opened the conversation with praises of my *Götz von Berlichingen*, and of my thorough insight into German history, but I was nevertheless astonished when I discovered that he had really come for the sole purpose of informing me that Götz von Berlichingen was no brother-in-law to Franz von Sickingen, and that therefore, by introducing this matrimonial alliance, I had committed a grave historical error. I tried to excuse myself by the statement that Götz himself calls him so, but was met by the reply, that this is a form of expression which only denotes an intimate and friendly relationship, just as in modern times we call postilions "brothers-in-law," without being bound to them by any family tie. I thanked him as well as I could for this information, and only regretted that the error could not now be remedied. He echoed my regret and exhorted me most kindly to a further study of the German history and constitution, and offered me his library, of which I afterwards made good use.

But the drollest event of the sort which occurred to me was the visit of a bookseller, who, with cheerful liberality, requested a dozen plays of the kind, promising to pay well for them. How amused we were at this offer may be imagined; and yet, in fact, he was not so very far in the wrong, for I was already secretly occupied in studying the chief events preceding and following this turning-point in German history, and in

## ON MYSELF

working them up in the same spirit—a laudable design, which, like many others, was frustrated by the rapid flight of time.

This play, however, had not been the author's sole occupation, for while it was being composed, written, rewritten, printed, and circulated, other ideas and plans were stirring in his mind. Those which allowed of dramatic treatment had so far the precedence that they were oftenest thought over and brought nearer to execution ; but at the same time he gradually came to clothe his thoughts in a new form which is not usually classed as drama, but yet has a great affinity with it. This transition was chiefly brought about by the author's propensity to turn even soliloquy into dialogue.

Having always spent his most pleasant hours in society, he devised the following plan for changing even solitary thought into social conversation :—When he was alone, he would call up before his mind any person of his acquaintance ; then entreat him to sit down, walk up and down beside him, or remain standing before him, and discourse with him on the subject he had in his mind. His friend would answer as occasion required, or by the usual gestures signify his approval or dissent ;—and in such gestures every man has his individual traits. The speaker then continued to develop further those subjects which seemed to please his guest, or to limit and define more closely those of which he disapproved ; and, finally, would be polite enough even to yield his point. The strangest thing about it was, that he never selected persons of his intimate acquaintance, but only those whom he seldom saw, and some even who lived in distant parts of the world, and with whom he had only

## GOETHE

come into passing contact. They were, however, chiefly persons more receptive than communicative by nature, who were ready to take an open-minded interest in the things which fall within their range of vision, though he occasionally summoned dissentient spirits to these dialectic exercises. Persons of both sexes, of every age and rank, took their share in these discussions, and were invariably pleasant and obliging, since he only conversed on subjects which were intelligible and agreeable to them. Yet many would have thought it strange indeed, could they have learned how often they were summoned to these imaginary conversations, seeing that many of them would hardly have consented to a real one.

It is evident how nearly akin such a mental dialogue is to written correspondence; only that in the latter we see the confidence we have bestowed, reciprocated, while in the former, we create one for ourselves, new, ever-changing, and unreciprocated. So when the author felt an impulse to describe that satiety of life felt by men, even when they are not driven to it by misfortune, he naturally hit at once upon the plan of expressing himself in letters; for all gloom is the child and pupil of solitude—whoever resigns himself to it flies all opposition, and what can be more opposed to his state of mind than the cheerfulness of society? The enjoyment in life felt by others is to him a painful reproach; and thus, those very influences which should charm him out of himself, throw him back to brood upon his misery. If he gives any expression to his feelings, it will be by letters; for a written effusion, whether bright or gloomy, has at the time of writing to face no opposition, while an answer containing contrary arguments gives the solitary

## ON MYSELF

soul cause and opportunity for hardening and confirming himself in his melancholy mood. The letters of Werther, written in this spirit, have so manifold a charm, precisely because their various contents were first talked over with several individuals in such imaginary dialogues, and only later in the process of composition itself were made to appear as if directed to one single friend and sympathizer. It would be hardly advisable to say more on the mode of treatment adopted in a little book which has been so much discussed, but, with respect to the contents, something may yet be added.

This loathing of life has both physical and moral causes; the former we will leave to the investigation of the physician, the latter to that of the moralist, and in this well-worn matter, only consider the main point, where the phenomenon is most clearly revealed. All comfort in life is based upon a regular recurrence of external phenomena. The change of day and night, of the seasons, of flowers and fruits, and all other recurring pleasures that come to us, that we may and should enjoy them—these are the main springs of our earthly life. The more open we are to these enjoyments, the happier we are; but, if these changing phenomena unfold themselves before us and we take no interest in them, if we are insensible to such fair solicitations, then comes on the sorest evil, the heaviest disease—we regard life as a loathsome burden. It is said of an Englishman, that he hanged himself that he might no longer have to dress and undress himself every day. I once knew a worthy gardener, whose work was the superintendence of a large park, who once cried out with vexation, "Shall I always see these rain clouds moving from west to east?"

## GOETHE

It is even told of one of our greatest men, that it irked him to see the returning green of spring, and that he wished for the sake of variety, it might for once be red. These are really the symptoms of weariness of life, which not infrequently results in suicide, and which, in self-absorbed, reflective men, was more frequent than one would imagine.

Nothing occasions this weariness more than the recurrence of the passion of love. First love, it is rightly said, is the only one deserving of the name, for second love, by its very existence, destroys the highest meaning of love. That conception of the eternal and infinite, which should elevate and support it, is destroyed, and it appears as transient as every other intermittent phenomenon. And the conflict between the sensual and the moral, which, in this complicated civilization sunders the feelings of love and desire, is the cause of an exaggeration which can lead to no good.

Moreover, a young man soon perceives in others, if not in himself, that there are changing phases in the moral world as well as in the seasons of the year. The condescension of the great, the favour of the strong, the encouragement of the influential, the attachment of the multitude, the love of individuals—all have their vicissitudes, and we can no more hold them fast than we could the sun, the moon, and the stars. And yet these are not mere workings of nature; they escape us either by our own or by another's fault, by chance or skill; yet change they do, and we are never sure of them.

But what most pains a sensitive youth is the unceasing recurrence of our faults; for it takes us long to learn that while we cultivate our

## ON MYSELF

virtues, we are nurturing our faults at the same time. The former rest upon the latter as upon their root, and the latter send forth underground ramifications as strong and as various as any of those which the former send forth into the open light of day. Further, as we generally practise our virtues by a conscious exercise of will, whereas we are unconsciously surprised by our faults, the former seldom procure us any pleasure, while the latter constantly bring with them trouble and pain. Here lies the knotty point in self-knowledge, one which makes it all but impossible. If we add to all this young and feverish blood, an imagination on which isolated facts worked with benumbing force, and, above all, the uncertain vicissitudes of the hour, it is not to be wondered at if the impatient sufferer strove to free himself from such a strait.

However, such gloomy reflections, which lead those who yield to them along paths which have no turning, could not have developed so decidedly in the minds of our German youth, had not an outward stimulus incited and encouraged these morbid tendencies. Such a stimulus they found in English literature, especially in its poetry, for its great beauties are bound up with a grave melancholy, which is easily caught by those who love to read it. The intellectual Briton, from his youth up, sees himself surrounded by a world of stirring interest, which stimulates all his powers; he perceives, sooner or later, that he must gather all his wits together if he hopes to come to an understanding with it. How many of their poets have in their youth led a loose and riotous life, and soon found themselves justified in complaining of the vanity of earthly things? How many of them have tried their fortune in worldly affairs, have



## GOETHE

filled principal or subordinate posts, in parliament, at court, in the ministry, or in an embassy, have taken an active part in internal disorders and changes of constitutions and government, only to experience, if not in their own case, at any rate in that of friends and patrons, grievous rather than happy consequences! How many have been banished, imprisoned, or have suffered in their property!

Simply to be a spectator of such great events inspires seriousness; and to what can such serious thought lead us if not to the contemplation of the transitoriness and worthlessness of all earthly things? The German, too, is of a serious turn, and therefore he found English poetry not only greatly to his taste, but; as it sprang from a loftier level, even awe-inspiring. It reveals a strong and able intellect, well-schooled in the ways of the world, a deep and tender heart, a firm will, a passionate energy,—the very noblest qualities to be admired in a man of education and talent; but all this put together does not make a poet. True poetry is that which, like a worldly gospel, can by its inner serenity and outward calm free us from the earthly burdens which press upon us. Like an air-balloon, it lifts us, together with the ballast which we bear, into higher regions, where the confused mazes of the world lie spread out before us as in a bird's-eye view. The gayest and the most serious works have the same aim of tempering both pain and pleasure by their felicitous and skilful presentment. Let us consider, only from this point of view, the majority of English poems, most of them moral and didactic, and on the average they will show us nothing but a gloomy weariness of life. Not only Young's *Night Thoughts*, where this theme in particular is

## ON MYSELF

worked out, but even the other contemplative poems, stray, before one is aware of it, into this dismal region, where the understanding is presented with a problem which it cannot solve, since here even religion, such religion at least as it is able to construct, refuses its help. Whole volumes might be compiled to serve as a commentary to this frightful text—

“Then old Age and Experience, hand in hand,  
Lead him to death, and make him understand,  
After a search so painful and so long,  
That all his life he has been in the wrong.”

What further helps to make English poets accomplished misanthropes, and diffuses over their writings that unpleasant sense of universal antagonism, is the fact that all of them, owing to their many national divisions, are forced to devote themselves for the best part, if not for the whole of their lives, to one party or another. Such a writer cannot praise and extol the members of his party, nor the cause to which he belongs, since, if he did, he would only excite envy and hostility, so he exercises his talent in slandering his opponents to the best of his ability, and in adding as much point and venom as he can to his satirical weapons. When this is done by both parties, the social life which lies between them is destroyed and wholly annihilated, so that a great, sensible and energetic nation appears to us, to use the mildest terms, merely as a spectacle of folly and madness. Even their love poems deal with mournful subjects. Here a deserted girl is dying, there a faithful lover is drowned, or is devoured by a shark before his hasty strokes can bring him to the side of his beloved; and a poet like Gray needs only to sit down in a churchyard, and harp upon the well-known

## GOETHE

strings, to instantly gather round him a company of the friends of melancholy. Milton in his *Allegro* must first drive away gloom in vehement verse, before he can attain a temperate glow of pleasure; and even the cheerful Goldsmith loses himself in elegiac sentiments, when in his *Deserted Village* he draws us a picture, as sad as it is charming, of a lost Paradise which his *Traveller* wanders over the whole earth to find again.

I have no doubt that bright works and cheerful poems can be brought forward to contradict what I have said, but the greater number, and the best of them, certainly belong to the older period; and more recent works belonging to this category have the same satirical, and bitter tendency, and treat women especially with contempt.

However that may be, it was such serious poems, so detrimental to all human energies, as those we have just referred to, that constituted our favourite reading, some seeking, in accordance with their dispositions, gentle elegiac melancholy, others heavy, oppressive, all-renouncing despair. Strangely enough, Shakespeare, our father and guide, who knows so well how to diffuse pure cheerfulness around him, only strengthened our feelings of discontent. Hamlet and his soliloquies were spectres which haunted all youthful minds. Each of us loved to commit to memory and recite the principal passages, and everybody fancied he had a right to be just as melancholy as the Prince of Denmark, though he had seen no ghost, and had no royal father to avenge.

But that a perfectly suitable environment might not be wanting to all this melancholy, Ossian had drawn us by his charm even to the *Ultima Thule*, where on a gray and boundless heath, wandering among projecting, moss-grown

## ON MYSELF

tomb-stones, we watched the grass around us swaying in a ghostly wind, and the lowering, cloudy sky above us. It was not till the moon rose that the Caledonian night was turned to day; departed heroes, faded maidens, hovered round us, until at last we really thought we saw the spirit of Loda in all its fearful reality.

In such an atmosphere, with such surrounding influences, with tastes and studies of this kind, tortured by unsatisfied passions, with no outward inducements to important activities, with the sole prospect of persisting in a dull, spiritless, commonplace life, we became—in gloomy wantonness—attached to the idea, that we could at all events quit life at pleasure, when we could bear it no longer. and found in this a miserable stay against the insults and ennui of our daily existence. This feeling was so general, that *Werther* produced its great effect precisely because it struck a corresponding chord in every heart, presenting in clear and concrete form a picture of the inner workings of a morbid youthful delusion. How accurately the English understood this form of wretchedness is shown by the few significant lines, written before *Werther* appeared—

“To griefs congenial prone,  
More wounds than nature gave he knew,  
While misery's form his fancy drew  
In dark ideal hues and horrors not its own.”

Suicide is an incident in human life which, however much disputed and discussed, demands the sympathy of every man, and in every age must be dealt with anew. Montesquieu grants his heroes and great men the right of killing themselves as they think fit. since he says that it must be free to everyone to close the

## GOETHE

fifth act of his tragedy when he pleases. But here it is not a question of those who have led an active and distinguished life, who have sacrificed their days for a great empire, or for the cause of freedom, and cannot be blamed if they hope to pursue in another world the idea which inspires them, as soon as this idea has vanished from the earth. We are here concerned with those whose life is embittered in the most peaceful circumstances by want of action and by the exaggerated demands they make upon themselves. Since I myself was in this predicament, and best know the pain I suffered in it, and the exertion it cost me to free myself from it, I will not try to hide the reflections which I then made, with much deliberation, on the various kinds of death a man might choose.

There is something so unnatural in the attempt made by any man to tear himself from himself, and not only to injure, but to destroy himself, that he generally has recourse to mechanical devices for carrying out his design. When Ajax falls upon his sword, it is the weight of his body which renders him this last service. When the warrior exacts an oath of his shieldbearer not to let him fall into the hands of the enemy, it is still an external force which he secures, only a moral instead of a physical one. Women seek to cool their despair in water, and, to take the extreme instance of such mechanical aids, fire-arms ensure swift action with the least exertion. Hanging is repellent, because it is an ignoble death. It is more likely to occur in England, because there, from youth up, it is common to see many hanged without the punishment being exactly dishonourable. By poison, by opening the veins, the aim is to leave life slowly; and that most refined, rapid,

## ON MYSELF

and painless death by the sting of an adder, was worthy of a queen, who had passed her life in splendours and delights. But all these are external aids, enemies with which man forms an alliance against himself.

When I came to consider all these means, and to follow them out in history, I found that amongst all those who killed themselves, no one perpetrated the deed with such grandeur or freedom of soul, as the Emperor Otho. This man, defeated as a general, but by no means reduced to extremities, resolved to quit the world for the benefit of the empire, which, in a sense, already belonged to him, and for the sake of sparing many thousand lives. He has a cheerful supper with his friends, and the next morning it is found that he has stabbed himself to the heart with his dagger. This singular deed seemed to me worthy of imitation ; and I was convinced that no one who could not in this imitate Otho, had a right to take his own life. By this conviction, I freed myself not only from the intention but also from the whim of suicide, which in those glorious times of peace had managed to creep in amongst an indolent youth. Among a considerable collection of weapons, I possessed a handsome, well-polished dagger. This I laid every night by my bed, and before I extinguished the candle, I tried whether I could succeed in plunging the sharp point a couple of inches deep into my breast. Since I never could succeed, I at last laughed myself out of the notion, threw off all hypochondriacal fancies, and resolved to live. But to be able to do this with serenity, I was obliged to translate into literary form and to clothe in words, all that I had felt, thought, and fancied on this important point. With this object in view I

## GOETHE

collected the scattered elements which had been at work in me the last few years ; I called back to mind the cases which had most afflicted and tormented me ; but failed in attaining any definite conception : I lacked an event, a plot in which to embody them.

Suddenly I heard the news of Jerusalem's death, and, on the heels of the general rumour, came the most accurate and circumstantial description of the whole occurrence : on the instant the plan of *Werther* was formed, and the whole drew together, and became a solid mass, just as water in a vessel, which is upon the point of freezing, is converted into hard ice by the most gentle shake. I was all the more anxious to hold fast this singular prize, to realize and carry out in all its parts a work of such important and varied contents, as I had once more become involved in a painful situation, which left me even less hope than any former one, and foreboded nothing but disappointment, if not ill-feeling.

It is always a misfortune to enter upon new relationships to which one has not been inured ; we are often against our will lured into a false sympathy, the incompleteness of such positions troubles us, and yet we see no means either of completing or of renouncing them.

Frau von La Roche had married her eldest daughter at Frankfort, and often came to visit her, but could not reconcile herself to the position which she herself had chosen. Instead of endeavouring either to feel at home in it or else to make some change in it, she indulged in such lamentations, as forced one to think that her daughter was unhappy ; although, as she wanted for nothing, and her husband denied her nothing, it was difficult to see exactly in what her unhappiness consisted. In

## ON MYSELF

the meanwhile I was well received in the house, and came into contact with the whole circle, consisting of those who had either contributed to bring about the marriage, or else hoped it would result in the happiness of both. The Dean of St. Leonard's, Dumeitz, became communicative and at last friendly with me. He was the first Catholic clergyman with whom I had come into close contact, and thanks to his clear-sightedness, I was able to gain from him pleasurable and satisfactory explanations of the faith, usages, and external and internal workings of this oldest of churches. I have a distinct memory too of an elegant, though middle-aged lady, named Servières. I formed the acquaintance of the Alessina-Schweizer, and other families, came into friendly relations with the sons, which lasted for some time, and so all at once found myself on intimate terms with a circle of strangers, in whose occupations, pleasures, and even religious exercises I was induced, nay, compelled to take part. My former relations to the young wife, which, properly speaking, were only those of a brother to a sister, continued after marriage; we were of corresponding ages; I was the only one in the whole circle in whom she heard an echo of those intellectual tones to which she had been accustomed from her youth. We lived on together in a childlike confidence, and although there was no note of passion in our intercourse, it was still painful enough, because she too could not reconcile herself to her new circumstances, and, although richly endowed with fortune's gifts, saw herself transplanted from the pleasant valley of Ehrenbreitstein and a happy childhood to the gloomy surroundings of a mercantile house, and forced to act as mother to several step-children.



## GOETHE

So I found myself hemmed in amid new family relations, without any real share or participation in their life. As long as they were happy with one another, all went on smoothly enough; but most of the parties concerned turned to me in cases of vexation, and my lively sympathy generally did more harm than good. This situation soon became insupportable; all the disgust of life which usually springs from such unsatisfactory relationships, seemed to weigh on me with double and threefold weight, and a new and powerful resolution was once more needed to free me from it.

Jerusalem's death, which was occasioned by his unhappy attachment to the wife of a friend, shook me out of my dream, and I not only saw visibly before me what had befallen both him and me, but something similar which happened to me at the time stirred me too to passionate emotion, and hence I was naturally led to breathe into the work I had in hand all that warmth which makes no distinction between the imaginary and the actual. I completely isolated myself, prohibited the visits of my friends, and put aside all interests that did not immediately bear on the subject of my work. On the other hand, I gathered together everything that had any bearing on my design, going over the more recent events of my life of which I had as yet made no practical use. It was under such circumstances, and after such long and secret preparation that I wrote *Werther* in four weeks, with no previous written scheme either of the whole or of individual parts.

The manuscript, now finished, lay before me in a rough draft, with few corrections and alterations. It was made up into a book at once, for the binding is to a written work of much the same use as the frame is to a picture; it is much easier

## ON MYSELF

to see whether there is really anything in it. I had written the little volume, almost unconsciously, like a somnambulist, and was myself astonished at it when I went through it, in order to alter and improve it. Thinking, however, that after some time, when I could look at the work from a certain distance, many possible improvements might occur to me, I gave it to my younger friends to read, and the effect produced on them was all the greater, as, contrary to my usual custom, I had told no one of it, nor revealed my plan beforehand. Yet here again it was the subject-matter which really produced the effect, and in this respect they were in a frame of mind precisely the reverse of my own; for by this composition, more than by any other, I had freed myself from that stormy element, in which, by my own fault and that of others, by a mode of life at once designed and accidental, of set purpose and by heedless precipitation, by obstinacy and pliability, I had been so violently tossed to and fro. I felt as if I had made a general confession, and was once more free and happy, and justified in beginning a new life.

The old recipe had this time done me excellent service. But while I myself felt eased and enlightened by having turned fact into fiction, my friends were demoralized by my work, for they thought that fiction should be turned into fact, that the hero ought to be imitated, and that the least one could do was to shoot oneself. The effect produced upon a few afterwards extended to the general public, and this little book, which had been so beneficial to me, was decried as extremely injurious.

But all the evils and misery it is supposed to have caused were nearly prevented by an

## GOETHE

accident, for soon after its production it ran the risk of being destroyed. This is what happened :— Merck had recently returned from St. Petersburg ; I had had very little talk with him, because he was always busy, and only gave him a very general idea of the *Werther* which lay so near my heart. One day he called upon me, and as he did not seem very talkative, I asked him to listen to me. He sat down on the sofa, and I began to read the story letter by letter. After I had read for some time, without eliciting any sign of approval, I laid still more stress upon the pathos,—but what were my feelings when, at a pause which I made, he struck a terrible blow at my hopes with a calm, “ Yes ! very pretty,” and withdrew without any further remark. I was beside myself, for though I found pleasure in my works, I was at first quite unable to pass judgment on them. I now quite believed that I had made a mistake in subject, tone, and style—all of which were doubtful—and had produced something quite impossible. Had a fire been at hand, I should have burnt the work at once ; but I again plucked up courage, and passed some painful days, until he at last assured me in confidence, that at that moment he had been in the most frightful position possible to any man. He had, therefore, neither seen nor heard anything, and did not even know what the manuscript was about. In the meanwhile his trouble had been set right, as far as possible, and Merck, when his energies were awake, was a man to bear any calamity, even the most stupendous ; his humour returned, only it had grown even more bitter than before. He harshly condemned my design of re-writing *Werther*, and wished to see it printed just as it was. A fair copy was made, which did not

## ON MYSELF

long remain on my hands, for on the very day on which my sister was married to Georg Schlosser, and while the house was full of rejoicing at the event, a letter from Weygand, of Leipzig, arrived, in which he asked me for a manuscript. I looked on such a coincidence as a favourable omen. I sent off *Werther*, and was well satisfied to find that the remuneration I received for it was not entirely swallowed up by the debts I had been forced to contract on account of *Götz von Berlichingen*.

The effect this little book produced was enormous, chiefly because it exactly hit the temper of the times. For just as a little match will blow up a vast mine, so the force of the explosion which followed my publication was due to the fact that the youth of our generation had already undermined itself; and the shock was so great, because all extravagant demands, unsatisfied passions, and imaginary wrongs, found in it a violent and sudden vent. It cannot be expected of the public that it should receive a work of art in an artistic spirit. As a matter of fact, it was only the subject, the material, that was considered, as I had already found to be the case among my own friends; while at the same time the old prejudice appeared, that the dignity of a printed book required it to have a moral aim. But a true picture of life has none. It neither approves nor censures, but develops feelings and actions in their natural consequences, and thereby enlightens and instructs.

## JOHN STUART MILL

From the winter of 1821, when I first read Bentham, and especially from the commencement of the Westminster Review, I had what might truly be called an object in life ; to be a reformer of the world. My conception of my own happiness was entirely identified with this object. The personal sympathies I wished for were those of fellow labourers in this enterprise. I endeavoured to pick up as many flowers as I could by the way ; but as a serious and permanent personal satisfaction to rest upon, my whole reliance was placed on this ; and I was accustomed to felicitate myself on the certainty of a happy life which I enjoyed, through placing my happiness in something durable and distant, in which some progress might be always making, while it could never be exhausted by complete attainment. This did very well for several years, during which the general improvement going on in the world and the idea of myself as engaged with others in struggling to promote it, seemed enough to fill up an interesting and animated existence. But the time came when I awakened from this as from a dream. It was in the autumn of 1826. I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to ; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement ; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times, becomes insipid or indifferent ; the state, I should think, in which converts to Methodism usually are, when smitten by their first 'conviction of sin.' In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put the

## ON MYSELF

question directly to myself: 'Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?' And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, 'No!' At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for.

At first I hoped that the cloud would pass away of itself; but it did not. A night's sleep, the sovereign remedy for the smaller vexations of life, had no effect on it. I awoke to a renewed consciousness of the woeful fact. I carried it with me into all companies, into all occupations. Hardly anything had power to cause me even a few minutes' oblivion of it. For some months the cloud seemed to grow thicker and thicker. The lines in Coleridge's 'Dejection'—I was not then acquainted with them—exactly describe my case:

A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,  
A drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief,  
Which finds no natural outlet or relief  
In word, or sigh, or tear.

In vain I sought relief from my favourite books; those memorials of past nobleness and greatness from which I had always hitherto drawn strength and animation. I read them now without feeling, or with the accustomed feeling *minus* all its charm; and I became persuaded, that my love of

## JOHN STUART MILL,

mankind, and of excellence for its own sake, had worn itself out. I sought no comfort by speaking to others of what I felt. If I had loved any one sufficiently to make confiding my griefs a necessity, I should not have been in the condition I was. I felt, too, that mine was not an interesting, or in any way respectable distress. There was nothing in it to attract sympathy. Advice, if I had known where to seek it, would have been most precious. The words of Macbeth to the physician often occurred to my thoughts. But there was no one on whom I could build the faintest hope of such assistance. My father, to whom it would have been natural to me to have recourse in any practical difficulties, was the last person to whom, in such a case as this, I looked for help. Everything convinced me that he had no knowledge of any such mental state as I was suffering from, and that even if he could be made to understand it, he was not the physician who could heal it. My education, which was wholly his work, had been conducted without any regard to the possibility of its ending in this result; and I saw no use in giving him the pain of thinking that his plans had failed, when the failure was probably irremediable, and, at all events, beyond the power of *his* remedies. Of other friends, I had at that time none to whom I had any hope of making my condition intelligible. It was, however, abundantly intelligible to myself; and the more I dwelt upon it, the more hopeless it appeared.

My course of study had led me to believe, that all mental and moral feelings and qualities, whether of a good or of a bad kind, were the results of association; that we love one thing, and hate another, take pleasure in one sort of action or

## ON MYSELF

contemplation, and pain in another sort, through the clinging of pleasurable or painful ideas to those things, from the effect of education or of experience. As a corollary from this, I had always heard it maintained by my father, and was myself convinced, that the object of education should be to form the strongest possible associations of the salutary class; associations of pleasure with all things beneficial to the great whole, and of pain with all things hurtful to it. This doctrine appeared inexpugnable; but it now seemed to me, on retrospect, that my teachers had occupied themselves but superficially with the means of forming and keeping up these salutary associations. 'They seemed to have trusted altogether to the old familiar instruments, praise and blame, reward and punishment. Now, I did not doubt that by these means, begun early, and applied unremittingly, intense associations of pain and pleasure, especially of pain, might be created, and might produce desires and aversions capable of lasting undiminished to the end of life. But there must always be something artificial and casual in associations thus produced. The pains and pleasures thus forcibly associated with things, are not connected with them by any natural tie; and it is therefore, I thought, essential to the durability of these associations, that they should have become so intense and inveterate as to be practically indissoluble, before the habitual exercise of the power of analysis had commenced. For I now saw, or thought I saw, what I had always before received with incredulity—that the habit of analysis has a tendency to wear away the feelings: as indeed it has, when no other mental habit is cultivated, and the analysing spirit remains without its



## JOHN STUART MILL

natural complements and correctives. The very excellence of analysis (I argued) is that it tends to weaken and undermine whatever is the result of prejudice; that it enables us mentally to separate ideas which have only casually clung together: and no associations whatever could ultimately resist this dissolving force, were it not that we owe to analysis our clearest knowledge of the permanent sequences in nature; the real connexions between Things, not dependent on our will and feelings; natural laws, by virtue of which, in many cases, one thing is inseparable from another in fact; which laws, in proportion as they are clearly perceived and imaginatively realized, cause our ideas of things which are always joined together in Nature, to cohere more and more closely in our thoughts. Analytic habits may thus even strengthen the associations between causes and effects, means and ends, but tend altogether to weaken those which are, to speak familiarly, a *mere* matter of feeling. They are therefore (I thought) favourable to prudence and clear-sightedness, but a perpetual worm at the root both of the passions and of the virtues; and, above all, fearfully undermine all desires, and all pleasures, which are the effects of association, that is, according to the theory I held, all except the purely physical and organic; of the entire insufficiency of which to make life desirable, no one had a stronger conviction than I had. These were the laws of human nature, by which, as it seemed to me, I had been brought to my present state. All those to whom I looked up, were of opinion that the pleasure of sympathy with human beings, and the feelings which made the good of others, and especially of mankind on a large scale, the object of existence, were

## ON MYSELF

the greatest and surest sources of happiness. Of the truth of this I was convinced, but to know that a feeling would make me happy if I had it, did not give me the feeling. My education, I thought, had failed to create these feelings in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis, while the whole course of my intellectual cultivation had made precocious and premature analysis the inveterate habit of my mind. I was thus, as I said to myself, left stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well-equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for: no delight in virtue, or the general good, but also just as little in anything else. The fountains of vanity and ambition seemed to have dried up within me, as completely as those of benevolence. I had had (as I reflected) some gratification of vanity at too early an age: I had obtained some distinction and felt myself of some importance, before the desire of distinction and of importance had grown into a passion: and little as it was which I had attained, yet having been attained too early, like all pleasures enjoyed too soon, it had made me *blasé* and indifferent to the pursuit. Thus neither selfish nor unselfish pleasures were pleasures to me. And there seemed no power in nature sufficient to begin the formation of my character anew, and create in a mind now irretrievably analytic, fresh associations of pleasure with any of the objects of human desire.

These were the thoughts which mingled with the dry heavy dejection of the melancholy winter of 1826-7. During this time I was not incapable of my usual occupations. I went on with them mechanically, by the mere force of habit. I had

## JOHN STUART MILL,

been so drilled in a certain sort of mental exercise, that I could still carry it on when all the spirit had gone out of it. I even composed and spoke several speeches at the debating society, how, or with what degree of success, I know not. Of four years continual speaking at that society, this is the only year of which I remember next to nothing. Two lines of Coleridge, in whom alone of all writers I have found a true description of what I felt, were often in my thoughts, not at this time (for I had never read them), but in a later period of the same mental malady :

Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,  
And hope without an object cannot live.

In all probability my case was by no means so peculiar as I fancied it, and I doubt not that many others have passed through a similar state ; but the idiosyncrasies of my education had given to the general phenomenon a special character, which made it seem the natural effect of causes that it was hardly possible for time to remove. I frequently asked myself, if I could, or if I was bound to go on living, when life must be passed in this manner. I generally answered to myself, that I did not think I could possibly bear it beyond a year. When, however, not more than half that duration of time had elapsed, a small ray of light broke in upon my gloom. I was reading, accidentally, Marmontel's 'Memoirs,' and came to the passage which relates his father's death, the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he, then a mere boy, felt and made them feel that he would be everything to them—would supply the place of all that they had lost. A vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was

## ON MYSELF

moved to tears. From this moment my burden grew lighter. The oppression of the thought that all feeling was dead within me, was gone. I was no longer hopeless : I was not a stock or a stone. I had still, it seemed, some of the material out of which all worth of character, and all capacity for happiness, are made. Relieved from my ever present sense of irremediable wretchedness, I gradually found that the ordinary incidents of life could again give me some pleasure ; that I could again find enjoyment, not intense, but sufficient for cheerfulness, in sunshine and sky, in books, in conversation, in public affairs ; and that there was, once more, excitement, though of a moderate kind, in exerting myself for my opinions, and for the public good. Thus the cloud gradually drew off, and I again enjoyed life : and though I had several relapses, some of which lasted many months, I never again was as miserable as I had been.

The experiences of this period had two very marked effects on my opinions and character. In the first place, they led me to adopt a theory of life, very unlike that on which I had before acted, and having much in common with what at that time I certainly had never heard of, the anti-self-consciousness theory of Carlyle. I never, indeed, wavered in the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, and the end of life. But I now thought that this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness ; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something

## JOHN STUART MILL

else, they find happiness by the way. The enjoyments of life (such was now my theory) are sufficient to make it a pleasant thing, when they are taken *en passant*, without being made a principal object. Once make them so, and they are immediately felt to be insufficient. They will not bear a scrutinizing examination. Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so. The only chance is to treat, not happiness, but some end external to it, as the purpose of life. Let your self-consciousness, your scrutiny, your self-interrogation, exhaust themselves on that; and if otherwise fortunately circumstanced you will inhale happiness with the air you breathe, without dwelling on it or thinking about it, without either forestalling it in imagination, or putting it to flight by fatal questioning. This theory now became the basis of my philosophy of life. And I still hold to it as the best theory for all those who have but a moderate degree of sensibility and of capacity for enjoyment, that is, for the great majority of mankind.

The other important change which my opinions at this time underwent, was that I, for the first time, gave its proper place, among the prime necessities of human well-being, to the internal culture of the individual. I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and for action.

I had now learnt by experience that the passing susceptibilities needed to be cultivated as well as the active capacities, and required to be nourished and enriched as well as guided. I did not, for an instant, lose sight of, or undervalue, that part of the truth which I had seen before; I never turned recreant to intellectual

## ON MYSELF

culture, or ceased to consider the power and practice of analysis as an essential condition both of individual and of social improvement. But I thought that it had consequences which required to be corrected, by joining other kinds of cultivation with it. The maintenance of a due balance among the faculties, now seemed to me of primary importance. The cultivation of the feelings became one of the cardinal points in my ethical and philosophical creed. And my thoughts and inclinations turned in an increasing degree towards whatever seemed capable of being instrumental to that object.

I now began to find meaning in the things which I had read or heard about the importance of poetry and art as instruments of human culture. But it was some time longer before I began to know this by personal experience. The only one of the imaginative arts in which I had from childhood taken great pleasure, was music; the best effect of which (and in this it surpasses perhaps every other art) consists in exciting enthusiasm; in winding up to a high pitch those feelings of an elevated kind which are already in the character, but to which this excitement gives a glow and a fervour, which, though transitory at its utmost height, is precious for sustaining them at other times. This effect of music I had often experienced; but like all my pleasurable susceptibilities it was suspended during the gloomy period. I had sought relief again and again from this quarter, but found none. After the tide had turned, and I was in process of recovery, I had been helped forward by music, but in a much less elevated manner. I at this time first became acquainted with Weber's Oberon, and the extreme pleasure which I drew from its

## JOHN STUART MILL

delicious melodies did me good, by showing me a source of pleasure to which I was as susceptible as ever. The good, however, was much impaired by the thought, that the pleasure of music (as is quite true of such pleasure as this was, that of mere tune) fades with familiarity, and requires either to be revived by intermittence, or fed by continual novelty. And it is very characteristic both of my then state, and of the general tone of my mind at this period of my life, that I was seriously tormented by the thought of the exhaustibility of musical combinations. The octave consists only of five tones and two semi-tones, which can be put together in only a limited number of ways, of which but a small proportion are beautiful: most of these, it seemed to me, must have been already discovered, and there could not be room for a long succession of Mozarts and Webers, to strike out, as these had done, entirely new and surpassingly rich veins of musical beauty. This source of anxiety may, perhaps, be thought to resemble that of the philosophers of Laputa, who feared lest the sun should be burnt out. It was, however, connected with the best feature in my character, and the only good point to be found in my very unromantic and in no way honourable distress. For though my dejection, honestly looked at, could not be called other than egotistical, produced by the ruin, as I thought, of my fabric of happiness, yet the destiny of mankind in general was ever in my thoughts, and could not be separated from my own. I felt that the flaw in my life, must be a flaw in life itself; that the question was, whether, if the reformers of society and government could succeed in their objects, and every person in the community were free and in a state of physical

## ON MYSELF

comfort, the pleasure of life, being no longer kept up by struggle and privation, would cease to be pleasures. And I felt that unless I could see my way to some better hope than this for human happiness in general, my dejection must continue ; but that if I could see such an outlet, I should then look on the world with pleasure ; content as far as I was myself concerned, with any fair share of the general lot.

This state of my thoughts and feelings made the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time (in the autumn of 1828), an important event in my life. I took up the collection of his poems from curiosity, with no expectation of mental relief from it, though I had before resorted to poetry with that hope. In the worst period of my depression, I had read through the whole of Byron (then new to me), to try whether a poet, whose peculiar department was supposed to be that of the intenser feelings, could rouse any feeling in me. As might be expected, I got no good from this reading, but the reverse. The poet's state of mind was too like my own. His was the lament of a man who had worn out all pleasures, and who seemed to think that life, to all who possess the good things of it, must necessarily be the vapid, uninteresting thing which I found it. His Harold and Manfred had the same burden on them which I had ; and I was not in a frame of mind to desire any comfort from the vehement sensual passion of his Giaours, or the sullenness of his Laras. But while Byron was exactly what did not suit my condition, Wordsworth was exactly what did. I had looked into the *Excursion* two or three years before, and found little in it ; and I should probably have found as little, had I read it at this



## JOHN STUART MILL

time. But the miscellaneous poems, in the two-volume edition of 1815 (to which little of value was added in the latter part of the author's life), proved to be the precise thing for my mental wants at that particular juncture.

In the first place, these poems addressed themselves powerfully to one of the strongest of my pleasurable susceptibilities, the love of rural objects and natural scenery; to which I had been indebted not only for much of the pleasure of my life, but quite recently for relief from one of my longest relapses into depression. In this power of rural beauty over me, there was a foundation laid for taking pleasure in Wordsworth's poetry; the more so, as his scenery lies mostly among mountains, which, owing to my early Pyrenean excursion, were my ideal of natural beauty. But Wordsworth would never have had any great effect on me, if he had merely placed before me beautiful pictures of natural scenery. Scott does this still better than Wordsworth, and a very second-rate landscape does it more effectually than any poet. What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings; which had no connexion with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been

## ON MYSELF

removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence. There have certainly been, even in our own age, greater poets than Wordsworth ; but poetry of deeper and loftier feeling could not have done for me at that time what his did. I needed to be made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only without turning away from, but with a greatly increased interest in the common feelings and common destiny of human beings. And the delight which these poems gave me, proved that with culture of this sort, there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis. At the conclusion of the Poems came the famous Ode, falsely called Platonic, 'Intimations of Immortality : ' in which, along with more than his usual sweetness of melody and rhythm, and along with the two passages of grand imagery but bad philosophy so often quoted, I found that he too had had similar experience to mine ; that he also had felt that the first freshness of youthful enjoyment of life was not lasting ; but that he had sought for compensation, and found it, in the way in which he was now teaching me to find it. The result was that I gradually, but completely, emerged from my habitual depression, and was never again subject to it. I long continued to value Wordsworth less according to his intrinsic merits, than by the measure of what he had done for me. Compared with the greatest poets, he may be said to be the poet of unpoetical natures, possessed of quiet and contemplative tastes. But unpoetical natures are precisely those which require poetic cultivation. This cultivation Wordsworth is much more fitted to give, than poets who are intrinsically far more poets than he.

## JOHN STUART MILL

It so fell out that the merits of Wordsworth were the occasion of my first public declaration of my new way of thinking, and separation from those of my habitual companions who had not undergone a similar change. The person with whom at that time I was most in the habit of comparing notes on such subjects was Roebuck, and I induced him to read Wordsworth, in whom he also at first seemed to find much to admire: but I, like most Wordsworthians, threw myself into strong antagonism to Byron, both as a poet and as to his influence on the character. Roebuck, all whose instincts were those of action and struggle, had, on the contrary, a strong relish and great admiration of Byron, whose writings he regarded as the poetry of human life, while Wordsworth's, according to him, was that of flowers and butterflies. We agreed to have the fight out at our Debating Society, where we accordingly discussed for two evenings the comparative merits of Byron and Wordsworth, propounding and illustrating by long recitations our respective theories of poetry: Sterling also, in a brilliant speech, putting forward his particular theory. This was the first debate on any weighty subject in which Roebuck and I had been on opposite sides. The schism between us widened from this time more and more, though we continued for some years longer to be companions. In the beginning, our chief divergence related to the cultivation of the feelings. Roebuck was in many respects very different from the vulgar notion of a Benthamite or Utilitarian. He was a lover of poetry and of most of the fine arts. He took great pleasure in music, in dramatic performances, especially in painting, and himself drew and designed landscapes with great facility and beauty.

## ON MYSELF

But he never could be made to see that these things have any value as aids in the formation of character. Personally, instead of being, as Benthamites are supposed to be, void of feeling, he had very quick and strong sensibilities. But, like most Englishmen who have feelings, he found his feelings stand very much in his way. He was much more susceptible to the painful sympathies than to the pleasurable, and looking for his happiness elsewhere, he wished that his feelings should be deadened rather than quickened. And, in truth, the English character, and English social circumstances, make it so seldom possible to derive happiness from the exercise of the sympathies, that it is not wonderful if they count for little in an Englishman's scheme of life. In most other countries the paramount importance of the sympathies as a constituent of individual happiness is an axiom, taken for granted rather than needing any formal statement; but most English thinkers almost seem to regard them as necessary evils, required for keeping men's actions benevolent and compassionate. Roebuck was, or appeared to be, this kind of Englishman. He saw little good in any cultivation of the feelings, and none at all in cultivating them through the imagination, which he thought was only cultivating illusions. It was in vain I urged on him that the imaginative emotion which an idea, when vividly conceived, excites in us, is not an illusion but a fact, as real as any of the other qualities of objects; and far from implying anything erroneous and delusive in our mental apprehension of the object, is quite consistent with the most accurate knowledge and most perfect practical recognition of all its physical and intellectual laws and relations. The intensest feeling of the beauty of a cloud lighted by the

## JOHN STUART MILL

setting sun, is no hindrance to my knowing that the cloud is vapour of water, subject to all the laws of vapours in a state of suspension ; and I am just as likely to allow for, and act on, these physical laws whenever there is occasion to do so, as if I had been incapable of perceiving any distinction between beauty and ugliness.

While my intimacy with Roebuck diminished, I fell more and more into friendly intercourse with our Coleridgian adversaries in the Society, Frederick Maurice and John Sterling, both subsequently so well known, the former by his writings, the latter through the biographies by Hare and Carlyle. Of these two friends, Maurice was the thinker, Sterling the orator, and impassioned expositor of thoughts which, at this period, were almost entirely formed for him by Maurice.

With Maurice I had for some time been acquainted through Eyton Tooke, who had known him at Cambridge, and although my discussions with him were almost always disputes, I had carried away from them much that helped to build up my new fabric of thought, in the same way as I was deriving much from Coleridge, and from the writings of Goethe and other German authors which I read during these years. I have so deep a respect for Maurice's character and purposes, as well as for his great mental gifts, that it is with some unwillingness I say anything which may seem to place him on a less high eminence than I would gladly be able to accord to him. But I have always thought that there was more intellectual power wasted in Maurice than in any other of my contemporaries. Few of them certainly have had so much to waste. Great powers of generalization, rare ingenuity and subtlety, and a wide perception of important and unobvious

## ON MYSELF

truths, served him not for putting something better into the place of the worthless heap of received opinions on the great subjects of thought, but for proving to his own mind that the Church of England had known everything from the first, and that all the truths on the ground of which the Church and orthodoxy have been attacked (many of which he saw as clearly as any one) are not only consistent with the Thirty-nine Articles, but are better understood and expressed in those Articles than by any one who rejects them. I have never been able to find any other explanation of this, than by attributing it to that timidity of conscience, combined with original sensitiveness of temperament, which has so often driven highly gifted men into Romanism from the need of a firmer support than they can find in the independent conclusions of their own judgment. Any more vulgar kind of timidity no one who knew Maurice would ever think of imputing to him, even if he had not given public proof of his freedom from it, by his ultimate collision with some of the opinions commonly regarded as orthodox, and by his noble origination of the Christian Socialist movement. The nearest parallel to him, in a moral point of view, is Coleridge, to whom, in merely intellectual power, apart from poetical genius, I think him decidedly superior. At this time, however, he might be described as a disciple of Coleridge, and Sterling as a disciple of Coleridge and of him. The modifications which were taking place in my old opinions gave me some points of contact with them; and both Maurice and Sterling were of considerable use to my development. With Sterling I soon became very intimate, and was more attached to him than I have ever been to

## JOHN STUART MILL

any other man. He was indeed one of the most loveable of men. His frank, cordial, affectionate, and expansive character; a love of truth alike conspicuous in the highest things and the humblest; a generous and ardent nature which threw itself with impetuosity into the opinions it adopted, but was as eager to do justice to the doctrines and the men it was opposed to, as to make war on what it thought their errors; and an equal devotion to the two cardinal points of Liberty and Duty, formed a combination of qualities as attractive to me, as to all others who knew him as well as I did. With his open mind and heart, he found no difficulty in joining hands with me across the gulf which as yet divided our opinions. He told me how he and others had looked upon me (from hearsay information), as a 'made' or manufactured man, having had a certain impress of opinion stamped on me which I could only reproduce; and what a change took place in his feelings when he found, in the discussion on Wordsworth and Byron, that Wordsworth, and all which that name implies, 'belonged' to me as much as to him and his friends. The failure of his health soon scattered all his plans of life, and compelled him to live at a distance from London, so that after the first year or two of our acquaintance, we only saw each other at distant intervals. But (as he said himself in one of his letters to Carlyle) when we did meet it was like brothers. Though he was never, in the full sense of the word, a profound thinker, his openness of mind, and the moral courage in which he greatly surpassed Maurice, made him outgrow the dominion which Maurice and Coleridge had once exercised over his intellect; though he retained to the last a great but

## ON MYSELF

discriminating admiration of both, and towards Maurice a warm affection. Except in that short and transitory phase of his life, during which he made the mistake of becoming a clergyman, his mind was ever progressive: and the advance he always seemed to have made when I saw him after an interval, made me apply to him what Goethe said of Schiller, 'er hatte eine furchtliche Fortschreitung.' He and I started from intellectual points almost as wide apart as the poles, but the distance between us was always diminishing: if I made steps towards some of his opinions, he, during his short life, was constantly approximating more and more to several of mine: and if he had lived, and had health and vigour to prosecute his ever assiduous self-culture, there is no knowing how much further this spontaneous assimilation might have proceeded.

After 1829 I withdrew from attendance on the Debating Society. I had had enough of speech-making, and was glad to carry on my private studies and meditations without any immediate call for outward assertion of their results. I found the fabric of my old and taught opinions giving way in many fresh places, and I never allowed it to fall to pieces, but was incessantly occupied in weaving it anew. I never, in the course of my transition, was content to remain, for ever so short a time, confused and unsettled. When I had taken in any new idea, I could not rest till I had adjusted its relation to my old opinions, and ascertained exactly how far its effect ought to extend in modifying or superseding them.



## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I have the more interest in beginning these memoirs where and how I do, because I am living absolutely alone in San Francisco, and because from two years of anxiety and, according to the doctors, a touch of malaria, I may say I am altogether changed into another character. After weeks in this city, I know only a few neighbouring streets; I seem to be cured of all my adventurous whims and even of human curiosity; and am content to sit here by the fire and await the course of fortune. Indeed I know myself no longer; and as I am changed in heart, I hope I have the more chance to look back impartially on all that has come and gone heretofore.

There is, after all, no truer sort of writing than what is to be found in autobiographies, and certainly none more entertaining. Or if any it is in fiction of the higher class which is the quintessence and last word both of veracity and entertainment. A man is perhaps not very sure of his taste in matters that concern him so nearly as the facts of his own career; he is not perhaps in a position to expand or brooder; but where can he have so fine an opportunity of condensation? I shall try here to be very dense and only to touch on what concerns me very deeply; for, as I am after all a man, that must be to some degree the concern of mankind.

It has been a question with me whether it could ever be worth while to write the lives of any that were not heroic; but a recollection of my own

## ON MYSELF

youth has sufficiently laid the scruple. This life of ours is at best so mixed a business, that between good and evil, between sense and folly, between the selfish and the generous impulse, we must always be glad to find ourselves countenanced and, as it were, brothered by a fellow-man; and where a life, low as it may be, has any upward tendency and does not progressively condescend with the baser parts of nature, if it be truly told, it may not only console but encourage others. Even where there is no human dignity, there will be some human pathos; even when no great right has been done, and the being under review has merely struggled along the borderland of good and evil with conspicuous lapses, that struggle itself is something holy. I suppose I am in agreement with the very best of men, when I say that I should wish, if I could live again, to change at least three-quarters of my thoughts and actions; and still, in company with the worst, I have moments in my experience upon which I can look back with unmingled satisfaction.

I was born in Edinburgh, in 1850, the 13th of November, my father Thomas Stevenson, my mother Margaret Isabella Balfour. My mother's family, the Balfours of Pilrig, is a good provincial stock; for near three centuries before my appearance, these Balfours had been judges, advocates and ministers of the Gospel, and I believe them related to many of the so-called good families of Scotland. The present laird, John Balfour, has made out the family tree, but I have never had the curiosity to see it. It concerns me much more that John Balfour of Kinlock, the covenanting fanatic, was an ancestral cousin; and that Dr. Smith of Galston—"Smith opens out his

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

could harangues"—was my mother's maternal grandfather. Thus I may call myself connected both with Scott and Burns.

My father's family is much more remarkable; this much at least may be said for it, that its history is unparalleled. My father heard a tradition that the first of his race came from France as Barber-chirurgeon to Cardinal Beaton; but there is small reason to doubt that we Stevensons are of Scandinavian descent. I wish I could prove we were related to old John Stevenson, author of the "Rare soul-strengthening and comforting Cordial"; and at least, so dark is the family history, I am at liberty to tell myself it may have been so. We rose out of obscurity in a clap. My father and Uncle David made the third generation, one Smith and two Stevensons, of direct descendants who had been engineers to the Board of Northern Lights; there is scarce a deep sea light from the Isle of Man north about to Berwick, but one of my blood designed it; and I have often thought that to find a family to compare with ours in the promise of immortal memory, we must go back to the Egyptian Pharaohs:—upon so many reefs and forelands that not very elegant name of Stevenson is engraved with a pen of iron upon granite. My name is as well known as that of the Duke of Argyle among the fishers, the skippers, the seamen, and the masons of my native land. Whenever I smell salt water, I know I am not far from one of the works of my ancestors. The Bell Rock stands monument for my grandfather; the Skerry Vohr for my Uncle Alan; and when the lights come out at sundown along the shores of Scotland, I am proud to think they burn more brightly for the genius of my father.

## ON MYSELF

I was an only child and, it may be in consequence, both intelligent and sickly. I have three powerful impressions of my childhood: my sufferings when I was sick, my delights in convalescence at my grandfather's manse of Colinton, near Edinburgh, and the unnatural activity of my mind after I was in bed at night. As to the first, I suppose it generally granted that none suffer like children from physical distress. We learn, as we grow older, a sort of courage under pain which marvellously lightens the endurance; we have made up our mind to its existence as a part of life; but the spirit of the child is filled with dismay and indignation, and these pangs of the mind are often little less intolerable than the physical distress that caused them. My recollection of the long nights when I was kept awake by coughing are only relieved by the thought of the tenderness of my nurse and second mother (for my first will not be jealous) Alison Cunningham. She was more patient than I can suppose of an angel; hours together she would help console me in my paroxysms; and I remember with particular distinctness, how she would lift me out of bed, and take me, rolled in blankets, to the window, whence I might look forth into the blue night starred with street-lamps, and see where the gas still burned behind the windows of other sickrooms. These were feverish, melancholy times; I cannot remember to have raised my head or seen the moon or any of the heavenly bodies; my eyes were turned downward to the broad lamplit streets, and to where the trees of the garden rustled together all night in undecipherable blackness; yet the sight of the outer world refreshed and cheered me; and the whole sorrow and burden of the night was at an end

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

with the arrival of the first of that long string of country carts that, in the dark hours of the morning, with the neighing of horses, the crackling of whips, the shouts of drivers and a hundred other wholesome noises, creaked, rolled, and pounded past my window.

I suffered, at other times, from the most hideous nightmares, which would wake me screaming and in the extremest frenzy of terror. On such occasions, none could pacify my nerves but my good father, who would rise from his own bed and sit by mine full of childish talk and reproducing aimless conversations with the guard or the driver of a mail coach, until he had my mind disengaged from the causes of my panic. These were sometimes very strange; one that I remember seemed to indicate a considerable force of imagination: I dreamed I was to swallow the world: and the terror of the fancy arose from the complete conception I had of the hugeness and populousness of our sphere. Disproportion and a peculiar shade of brown, something like that of sealskin, haunted me particularly during these visitations.

I have not space to tell of my pleasures at the manse. I have been happier since; for, I think most people exaggerate the capacity for happiness of a child; but I have never again been happy in the same way. For indeed, it was scarce a happiness of this world, as we conceive it when we are grown up, and was more akin to that of an animal than of that of a man. The sense of sunshine, of green leaves, and of the singing of birds, seems never to have been so strong in me as in that place. The deodar upon the lawn, the laurel thickets, the mills, the river, the church-bell, the sight of people ploughing, the Indian

## ON MYSELF

curiosities with which my uncles had stocked the house, the sharp contrast between this place and the city where I spent the other portion of my time, all these took hold of me, and still remain upon my memory, with a peculiar sparkle and sensuous excitement. I have somewhere part of a long paper on my solitary pleasures about the manse and garden; but I could write volumes and never be done; so clear, telling and memorable were my impressions.

It is odd, after so long an interval, to recall those incidents that struck me deepest. Once as I lay, playing hunter, hid in a thick laurel, and with a toy gun upon my arm, I worked myself so hotly into the spirit of my play, that I think I can still see the herd of antelope come sweeping down the lawn and round the deodar; it was almost a vision. Again, one warm summer evening on the front green, my aunt showed me the wing-bone of an albatross, told me of its largeness and how it slept upon the wing above the vast Pacific. and quoted from the "Ancient Mariner":

"With my cross bow,  
I shot the Albatross."

I do not believe anything so profoundly affected my imagination; and to this day, I am still faithful to the Albatross, as the most romantic creature of fable (or nature, I know not which), and the one, besides, that has the noblest name. I remember in particular, a view I had from the attic window, suddenly beholding, with delighted wonder, my ordinary playgrounds at my feet; and another outlook, when I climbed a hawthorn near the gate, and saw over the wall upon the snuff-mill garden, thick with flowers and bright with sunshine, a paradise not hitherto suspected.

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

My grandfather, the noblest looking old man I have ever seen, was one of the last, I suppose, to speak broad Scots and be a gentleman ; he did not, however, do so in his sermons ; which were in English and pretty dry, I fancy. I remember showing him my soldiers one day after dinner, as he sat over his daily nuts and port ; he told me to play at the battle of Coburg, which gave me a great sense of his antiquity, as I had never heard of that engagement. I chanced to be in the house when he was taken with his last sickness, and was packed home again to be out of the way. He was up, and trying to write letters, an hour or so before he died ; so that I think we may say he died young, although he was eighty. I shall never forget my last sight of him, the morning ere I left. He was pale and his eyes were, to me, somewhat appallingly blood-shot. He had a dose of Gregory's mixture administered and then a barley sugar drop to take the taste away ; but when my aunt wished to give one of the drops to me, the rigid old gentleman interfered. No Gregory's mixture, no barley sugar, said he. I feel with a pang, that it is better he is dead for my sake ; if he still sees me, it is out of a clearer place than any earthly situation, whence he may make allowances and consider both sides. But had he lived in the flesh, he would have suffered perhaps as much from what I think my virtues as from what I acknowledge to be my faults. Thus we may be reconciled to the passing away of the aged, that it leaves a field for youth.

I have mentioned my aunt. In her youth she was a wit and a beauty, very imperious, managing, and self-sufficient. But as she grew up she began to suffice for all the family as well. An accident on horseback, she says, but I have

## ON MYSELF

heard it was a natural cause, made her nearly deaf and blind, and suddenly transformed this wilful empress into the most serviceable and amiable of women and the family maid of all work. There were thirteen of the Balfours, as (oddly enough) there were of the Stevensons also; and the children of the family came home to her to be nursed, to be educated, to be mothered, from the infanticidal climate of India. There must sometimes have been half a score of us children about the Manse; and all were born a second time from Aunt Jane's tenderness. It was strange when a new party of these sallow young folk came home, perhaps with an Indian ayah. This little country manse was a centre of the world: and Aunt Jane represented Charity. The text, my mother says, must have been written for her and Aunt Jane: more are the children of the barren than the children of the married wife.

We children had naturally many plays together; I usually insisted on the lead, and was invariably exhausted to death by evening. One day of such happy excitement was often followed by two or three in bed with a fever—*furia scozzese*.

But the time when my mind displayed most activity was after I was put to bed and before I fell asleep. I remember these periods more distinctly and I believe further back than any other part of my childhood. I would lie awake declaiming aloud to myself my views of the universe in something that I called singing although I have no ear and in a measure of my own although at that time I can have known nothing of verse. One of these *Songstries*, for so I named my evening exercises, was taken down by my father from behind the door, and I have seen it within the last few years. It dealt summarily with the Fall



## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

of Man, taking a view most inimical to Satan ; but what is truly odd, it fell into a loose, irregular measure with a tendency toward the ten-syllable heroic line. This, as I am sure I can then have heard little or nothing but hymn metres, seems to show a leaning in the very constitution of the language to that form of verse ; or was it but a trick of the ear, inherited from eighteenth century ancestors ? It was certainly marked when taken in connection with my high-strung religious ecstasies and terrors. It is to my nurse that I owe these last : my mother was shocked when, in days long after, she heard what I had suffered. I would not only lie awake to weep for Jesus, which I have done many a time, but I would fear to trust myself to slumber lest I was not accepted and should slip, ere I awoke, into eternal ruin. I remember repeatedly, although this was later on, and in the new house, waking from a dream of Hell, clinging to the horizontal bar of the bed, with my knees and chin together, my soul shaken, my body convulsed with agony. It is not a pleasant subject. I piped and snivelled over the Bible, with an earnestness that had been talked into me. I would say nothing without adding "If I am spared," as though to disarm fate by a show of submission ; and some of this feeling still remains upon me in my thirtieth year. I shook my numskull over the spiritual welfare of my parents, because they gave dinner parties and played cards, things contemned in the religious biographies on which my mind was fed ; and once, for a crowning point, I turned the tables on my nurse herself. She was reading aloud to me from *Cassell's Family Paper* a story called *The Soldier of Fortune*. It was about the Crimean War, then lately ended ;

## ON MYSELF

and from some superfluity of love affairs, Cummy (so I called my nurse) had expressed some fear lest it should turn out "a regular novel." That night I had a pain in my side which frightened me: I began to see Hell pretty clear, and cast about for any sin of which this might be punishment, and *The Soldier of Fortune* occurred to me as my leading "worldliness" of the moment. I foreswore it then and there; and next morning announced and uprightly held to my vow. So instead of something healthy about battles, I continued to have my mind defiled with Brainerd, M'Cheyne, and Mrs. Winslow, and a whole crowd of dismal and morbid devotees. I speak with measure; knowing these were admirable people. But I have never wished to be good in their way; nor, if that were the way of the majority, can I suppose that this world would be either good or kind or pleasant; and for a child, their utterances are truly poisonous. The life of Brainerd, for instance, my mother had the sense to forbid, when we were some way through it. God help the poor little hearts who are thus early plunged among the breakers of the spirit! They should dwell by shallow, sunny waters, plucking the lilies of optimism; but to go down into the great deep is not for these unused and trembling sailors.

When at night my mind was disengaged from either of these extremes, and there was no high wind, for I always hated and do still bitterly hate the noise of a storm about a house, I told myself romances in which I played the hero. Now and then the subject would be the animation of my playthings; but usually these fantasies embraced the adventures of a lifetime, full of far journeys and Homeric battles. I note these

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

peculiarities. They had no reference to religion; although that filled my mind so greatly at other moments, I was pure old pagan when I came to practice. Secondly, for as far back as I can remember, they bore always some relation to women, and Eros and Anteros must have almost equally divided my allegiance. And lastly they would be concluded always with a heroic, and sometimes with a cruel, death. I never left myself till I was dead.

When I was five years of age, my cousin, Robert Alan Stevenson, came to stay at my father's house; he was three years older than I, an imaginative child who had lived in a dream with his sisters, his parents, and the *Arabian Nights*, and more unfitted for the world, as was shown in the event, than an angel fresh from heaven. I shall speak of him some day more at length on his own account; but just now I have to do with myself and only mention others as they touched and moulded my character. We lived together in a purely visionary state. We had countries; his was Nosingtonia, mine Encyclopædia; where we ruled and made wars and inventions, and of which we were perpetually drawing maps. His was shaped a little like Ireland; mine lay diagonally across the paper like a large tip-cat. We were never weary of dressing up. We drew, we coloured our pictures; we painted and cut out the figures for a paste-board theatre; this last one of the dearest pleasures of my childhood, and one I was so loath to relinquish, that I followed it in secret till I must have been fifteen. This visit of Bob's was altogether a great holiday in my life.

Incidentally, too, I was then introduced to literature. My uncle, David Stevenson, offered a

## ON MYSELF

prize of £1 for the best *History of Moses* from any of us Stevenson cousins. My history was, of course, dictated; and from that day forth, I would always be dictating whenever I could command a pen. The *History of Moses* was copiously illustrated by the author in a very free style. In these pictures, each Israelite was represented with a pipe in his mouth, cheering the desert miles. I was, indeed, always drawing; but it was from a purely imitative and literary impulse. I never drew from nature, nor even from a copy; but brooded away at my fancies in a spirit the reverse of the artistic. It is told of me that I came once to my mother with these words: "Mamma, I have drawn a man's body; shall I draw his soul now?" And this shows how early I was at it, and how I merely used it as a language with no thought of exact form or plastic beauty. Not so much a quickness to draw, as an intensity of looking, should mark the youth of the true painter.

I learned to read when I was seven, looking over the pictures in illustrated papers while recovering from a gastric fever. It was thus done at a blow; all previous efforts to teach me having been defeated by my active idleness and remarkable inconsequence of mind. The same fever is remarkable to me for another reason: one of my little cousins (D.A.S.) having sent me a letter every day. This was a kindness I shall never forget till the day of my death; though I see little of him now, and cannot think he much affects me, I have an incredible, smothered warmth of affection towards him in my heart. As he will probably outlive me, I hope he may see these words and take the thanks I have been always too shy to renew to him in person.

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

On the whole I have not much joy in remembering these early years. I was as much an egotist as I have ever been; I had a feverish desire of consideration; I was ready to lie, although more often wrongly accused of it, or rather wrongfully punished for it, having lied unconsciously; I was sentimental, snivelling, goody, morbidly religious. I hope and do believe I am a better man than I was a child. With my respects to Wordsworth.

I was lovingly, but not always wisely treated, the great fault being Cummy's overhaste to make me a religious pattern. I have touched already on the cruelty of bringing a child among the awful shadows of man's life; but it must not be forgotten, it is also unwise, and a good way to defeat the educator's purpose. The idea of sin, attached to particular actions absolutely, far from repelling, soon exerts an attraction on young minds. Probably few over-pious children have not been tempted, sometime or other and by way of dire experiment, to deny God in set terms. The horror of the act, performed in solitude, under the blue sky; the smallness of the voice uttered in the stillness of noon; the panic flight from the scene of the bravado: all these will not have been forgotten. But the worst consequence is the romance conferred on doubtful actions; until the child grows to think nothing more glorious, than to be struck dead in the very act of some surprising wickedness. I can never again take so much interest in anything, as I took, in childhood, in doing for its own sake what I believed to be sinful. And generally, the principal effect of this false, common doctrine of sin, is to put a point on lust. The true doctrine has a very different influence, but had best be

## ON MYSELF

taught to children in particular instances, and under the general routine of kindness and unkindness.

Had I died in these years, I fancy I might perhaps have figured in a tract. I have been sometimes led to wonder if all the young saints of whom I have read and meditated with enthusiasm in my early periods, suffered from their biographers the same sort of kindly violence, or had idealised themselves by the same simply necessary suppressions, that would have fitted myself and my career for that gallery of worthies. In the case of the infantile saint, the devil's advocate is silence. The aspirations have not yet been brought to the touch of practice; the personal is still potential; saint and prig and coward are still not to be distinguished. Yet, in my case and with all my evil on my head, it is yet true there was something of the saintly. Not because I wept over the Saviour's agony; not because I could repeat, with some appropriate inflections, a psalm or two or the story of Shunammite's son; but because I had a great fund of simplicity, believed all things and the good rather than the evil, was very prone to love and inaccessible to hatred, and never failed in gratitude for any benefit I had the wit to understand. The sight of deformed persons and above all of hideous old women moved in me a sort of panic horror; yet I can well recall with what natural courtesy I strove to conceal my disaffection. Fairy, the hunchback druggist of Bridge of Allan, was a terror to me by day and haunted my dreams at night; but my pity was stronger than my distaste; and I made it a point to command myself and speak to him with a child's friendliness, whenever the poor vain man, little under-

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

standing what was in my heart, condescended to address me. There was an old woman, Annie Torrence, who helped at the washing, I believe; an inhuman, bearded spectre, with a human heart in spite of all; who made it her business to be kind to me and show off before me, singing, "It's all round my hat for a twelve month and a day" with witchlike steps and gestures, backing to and fro before me, the horrified and fascinated child. Out of my dreams, I have never feared so cordially any other phenomenon as this of Annie Torrence and her song; for I thought the song to be hers and to commemorate some romance of her so-long departed youth. Yet I know I was ever consciously busy in my own small and troubled soul, to bear a good face before this dismal entertainment and conceal from the old woman the disastrous effect she was producing. I think I was born with a sense of what is due to age; for the more I interrogate my recollections the more traces do I find of that respect struggling with the dislike of what is old and then seemed to me to be ugly. Of all the cruel things in life, the cruellest, it may be, is the departure of all beauty from those who have been the desired mothers and mistresses of men in a former generation. Pagans like Horace, devils like Villon—and yet he was a devil with a dash of the angelic, were it only in his wings—and simple crass vulgarians, like Gilbert, so much worse than the worst of the devilish—take an opportunity for some cheap effect of art from these distressing changes. I thank God, when I was a child I knew a higher decency. A man should have never been suckled at a woman's breast, he should never have slept in a woman's embrace, he should never have known, in the most passing manner, the pleasures of a

## ON MYSELF

woman's affection or the support of a woman's tenderness, so far to forget what is honourable in sentiment, what is essential in gratitude, or what is tolerable by other men.

To finish this matter, I must tell a story which illustrates the best of me and is, at the same time, pitifully comical. In Howe Street, round the corner from our house, I often saw a lame boy of rather a rough and poor appearance. He had one leg much shorter than the other, and wallowed in his walk, in consequence, like a ship in a seaway. I had read more than enough, in tracts and goody story books, of the isolation of the infirm; and after many days of bashfulness and hours of consideration, I finally accosted him, sheepishly enough I dare say, in these words: "Would you like to play with me?" I remember the expression, which sounds exactly like a speech from one of the goody books that had nerved me to the venture. But the answer was not the one I had anticipated, for it was a blast of oaths. I need not say how fast I fled. This incident was the more to my credit as I had, when I was young, a desperate aversion to addressing strangers, though when once we had got into talk I was pretty certain to assume the lead. The last particular may still be recognised. About four years ago, I saw my lame lad, and knew him again at once. He was then a man of great strength, rolling along, with an inch of cutty in his mouth and a butcher's basket on his arm. Our meeting had been nothing to him, but it was a great affair to me.

I have long given up all idea of autobiographical writing. Truly this is not for lack of trial; again and again have I embarked upon that business, and again and again with results that I



## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

can only describe as revolting. I do not know if my mother would have known me in these presentments; I certainly should never have known myself. But if a man cannot write common sense and common honesty about himself, he may very well attain to sense and honesty about his neighbours. His neighbours, besides, are not unlikely more interesting upon their own account. And the man may thus gratify his own desire to babble about things directly connected about his past; leave something which may make a little honest profit for his heirs; and at the same time, run a decent chance of entertaining the reader.

This reader, whom I suppose to be not yet born, is advised upon the threshold that the present lines are being dictated under every conceivable circumstance of disadvantage. The intolerable clatter of a typewriter removes from me all that makes it valuable to be man; and the pace at which I and my amanuensis advance is precisely too slow to admit the ordinary flow of conversation, and just too fast to attain the merits of considered composition. I shall trust, for the comfort of the reader and the pecuniary advantage of my heirs, that as time goes on I may grow used to this cumbersome process; and in the meanwhile, for the sake of the practice, if with no great hope of attaining any valuable results, I shall continue, even as I have begun, in a condition closely bordering on that of the sleepwalker, and hypnotised by the sound of the accursed instrument, to pour forth words. These words are intended to convey my impressions and reminiscences of various distinguished men, chiefly literary, whom it has been my fortune to encounter. But this I feel to be still on the lap of the gods; and whether, to the accom-

## ON MYSELF

paniment of the typewriter and under the unwonted strain and publicity of the act of dictation, I shall be able to say any one thing that I should wish to say, is a matter still beyond my forecast.

The first author whom it was my destiny to meet was Mr. Robert Michael Ballantyne. I dare say the reader is unacquainted with his works; they scarce seem to me designed for immortality; but they were exceedingly popular in my day with the whole world of children. Of these works I was myself an earnest student; and when Mr. Ballantyne decided to write a work in which my own grandfather was to play the part of something not unlike the hero, when he went to the Bell Rock on purpose to prepare himself for this important task, and when I myself was in consequence invited to meet him to dinner at my uncle's, my elation will be readily understood. Mr. Ballantyne proved to be an exceedingly good-looking, dark, full-bearded man; he sketched and displayed his sketches; he played on the piano, at that time quite a rare accomplishment with men; and he sang songs in which my cousins and I were expected to bear chorus. My cousins could, I could not; my cousins, perhaps because they did not admire Mr. Ballantyne so wholly as myself, were able to bear a part and, as it appeared to me, to shine in the conversation; I sat tongue-tied, I never told my love. I left my uncle's house, really sick of thwarted adoration; feeling that I was the true Codlins and my cousins usurping Shorts. I have forgotten to say that Mr. Ballantyne, in the course of conversation, brought forward a new claim to our esteem: he had been studying, with a view to yet another of his deciduous works, the life of firemen, had recently assisted at a fire, and if

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I have the story right, had with his own hands saved a life. Altogether, as a cheerful, good-looking, active, melodious and courageous human creature (whatever I may now think of his works) this sight of Mr. Ballantyne greatly strengthened an inborn partiality for authors. For many a long day after, the story I told myself at bed-time turned upon that superior being; I met him again, I had peculiar opportunities to shine, I distinguished myself by acts of daring, I was suddenly endowed with musical powers of a high order; and my ideal, turning to me with that black-bearded, white-toothed smile I had so much admired when it was addressed to others, recognised at last my superiority to my fallacious cousins.

It was many a long day before I came across another celebrity. It is true I had the benefit of the acquaintance of a certain number of the French masters of Edinburgh, one of whom came near celebrity and another succeeded in gaining the highest point of notoriety. The best of the lot, my good friend M. Victor Richon, had no particular claim to distinction. He was simply, in the old phrase, a scholar and a gentleman; loved letters well, understood them not ill; and was in every word and work, both a pleasant and an improving comrade. It was in the house of Richon that I met that big, gross, fat, black, hyperbolical, and entirely good-humoured adventurer, Van Laun. I should think he never harmed any one except those whom he induced to drink with him. My last sight of him, when he had quite given up school-mastering, and I myself had entered mildly upon the career of letters, it entertains me a good deal to recall. For upon that occasion, seated in an elaborately mounted study and surrounded with appliances

## ON MYSELF

which might have sufficed for a Voltaire or a Goethe, he calmly proposed to me to make the favourable reviewing of his own works the chief feature of my industry. What I was to receive in return, I never distinctly gathered; and for this reason, if for no other, the scheme was not pursued. Seemingly my fat acquaintance failed to find a substitute, for I have seen his works rather roughly handled; and indeed I suppose he has long since gone, where most of his old friends had preceded him, to the paradise of drinkers. There he will find his former afternoon society complete; poor Sam Bough, poor Edmonstone the publisher, poor Mackay the jeweller, all victims to the kindly jar. There too, if he chooses to recognise him, he may meet the third of my French acquaintances, Chantrelle the murderer.

I should say, looking back from the unfair superior ground of subsequent knowledge, that Chantrelle bore upon his brow the most open marks of criminality; or rather, I should say so if I had not met another man who was his exact counterpart in looks, and who was yet, by all that I could learn of him, a model of kindness and good conduct. I seem to come across nothing but dark men: Chantrelle was coal-black in hair, coal-black of eye, and of a sallow, leathery skin. Ill-nature, a painfully acute temper, a quivering, black sensibility of nerves, were written on every line of his face and confessed in every movement of his body. When I knew him, he seemed never happy except when he was drunk; and even then there was something uncomfortable in his mirth, something feverish and wild, such as I have seen represented by Herr Formes in the first act of *Freischütz*. There was good cause for this had I only known. He had left France because of

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

murder; he had left England because of a murder; already, since he was in Edinburgh, more than one—as I was told by the Procurator-Fiscal, more than four or five—had fallen a victim to his little supper parties and his favourite dish of toasted cheese and opium. And with all this expense of life, he was only clinging to solvency by his eyelids, he was being forced daily nearer to that last mismanaged crime that was to bring him to the gallows. I saw something of the expedients to which he was reduced, something of the wild hopes that buoyed him; and in seeing this, something also of his quite remarkable powers. One evening he met me on the street; asked me if I had seen Van Laun's translation of Molière; and when I told him I had and confessed that I could see no merit in that piece of work, his eyes blazed with hope, he had me to a public house; and bidding me name any passage in Molière with which I was well acquainted, offered to improvise without book a better version than Van Laun's. I accepted the challenge; and he, as far as I was in a position to judge, did well what he professed. But of course I was like himself without book; and I told him I was in no position to judge fairly, and that he must give me a written specimen before I could, as he desired, approach a publisher on his behalf. Well, I heard no more of it; the spark of hope, I must suppose, died out; he fell back on "the simpler plan" of killing other people; and when next I saw the translator of Molière, he was bearing, with singular and painful changes of countenance, the evidence on his own trial for murder. I do not think murder can be a good profession; Chantrelle had talents to succeed in any trade, honest or dishonest; and though it may be said

## ON MYSELF

that he did for a while succeed in that grisly one he had selected, it never brought him even decent means of livelihood, and to judge from his face, can have contributed little to his peace of mind.

I am not going to say anything of local or legal celebrities. I stick as close as I can by letters, which have been my trade and my chief pleasure. So that I must pass on direct to a certain very fortunate visit which I paid to England in the summer of the year 1873. I was at that time, as I had always been, firmly decided upon the career of letters. I was exceedingly well read and up in the last humours and fashions of the day. My text-book, or perhaps I should rather say my organ, was the *Fortnightly Review*, where I had the satisfaction of finding something like my own views, it still seems to me, exceptionally well expressed, and enjoying the ripe work of John Morley and his contributors. About that time the *Review* embraced some small-type pages of critical notices, signed by what I supposed to be the agreeable pseudonym of Sidney Colvin, and conceived in a style which I then thought little short of perfect; although nowadays I believe both Colvin and myself regard it as the last word of affectation. My visit to England was to a country rectory, the house of a cousin of mine and of her husband, the delightful Churchill Babington; I knew what I had to expect, croquet parties, the parsons' wives, the ecclesiastical celebrations; that I should there meet with the flesh-and-blood Colvin of the *Fortnightly Review*, was a thing beyond the bound of my extremest hopes.

Yet so it fell out. Nor only that, but I was brought under his notice, by a lady whose generous pleasure—perhaps I might almost say whose weakness—it was to discover youthful,

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

genius. With a little goodwill and a little friendship, genius is mighty easily supplied. Mrs. Sitwell found it or supplied it in my case, and announced the discovery or the attribution to Colvin. So it came about that when I went down to Cockfield Station, I was not only in a state of great agitation myself at the notion of meeting one of my great men, but the great man was prepared to notice me with favour. These preparations go a long way in life. I do not know, I do not think, that Colvin would have taken to me by nature; I am doubtful whether I should be taken to him. Meeting as we did, I the ready worshipper, he the ready patron, we had not got up the hill to the rectory, before we had begun to make friends.

• Sidney Colvin came of a stock of Indo-Scots. The most of his immediate ancestors and many of his collaterals had been men in high places in the Government of Hindostan. From this descent and these relations, he had acquired something arbitrary, something a little official, in manner and character, which was not a little increased by his experience as a Cambridge Don. He always had the air of a man accustomed to obedience; I do not know which was effect or which cause, but he was very generally obeyed; I have pretty generally obeyed him myself, and I am not subordinate by nature. A great shrewdness, a great simplicity of character, were conjoined in him; I do not know I have ever found them dissociated: an almost childish simplicity seems the head-mark of the true reader of his neighbours. Certainly in Colvin the two were to be found in extreme, there is no man whose trenchant insight I more fear, none at whose childishness I have more often smiled. I conceive

## ON MYSELF

of him mostly as of a soldier or a public servant thrown away. As a man of letters, the weakness of his health, which was little fitted for the prolonged unhealthy strain of that trade, and the extreme, almost morbid morosity of his taste, have smitten him with something near to impotence. The little he has done has been accomplished at a great cost of labour to himself, a cost of money to his publishers and of time and temper to the unhappy printer, that would be hard to parallel. Balzac was a current writer when compared to Sidney Colvin. It is very hard for me, even if I were merely addressing the unborn, to say what I owe to and what I think of this most trusty and noble-minded man. If I am what I am and where I am, if I have done anything at all or done anything well, his is the credit. It was he who paved my way in letters; it was he who set before me, kept before me, and still, as I write, keeps before me, a difficult standard of achievement; and it was to him and to Fleeming Jenkin that I owed my safety at the most difficult periods of my life. A friend of one's own age is too easily pleased or too easily silenced to be of much corrective use; a friend who is much our senior is too often a taskmaster whom we serve with counterfeits and please with falsehoods. These two had the tact and wisdom to suffer me to be very much myself; to accept and cherish what was good in me; to condone much of what was evil; and whilst still holding before me a standard to which I could never quite attain, neither to damp nor to disgust me of the trial. In the change of our relative ages, my dear Colvin has become so easy for me to live with, that I have a difficulty in recalling how it was



## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

at first. Doubtless, the *Fortnightly Review* would always have filled me with some awe. But it was far from being that alone; it was rather the certainty of his relations, the strong and restful impression of his courage, his unselfishness in all great matters (where alone, as I am sometimes tempted to think, unselfishness is graceful) that began in me the somewhat awful respect with which I at first regarded him.

On that first summer of our acquaintance, he had me to stay with him at his house and to dine with him more than once at the old Savile Club, afterwards and so long my own headquarters. At the Savile I saw, just saw, Walter Pater; at Norwood, I dined with Kingdon Clifford, and was then, as always afterwards, principally impressed by his irresponsible boyishness of mind and manner. Clifford was then in the hot fit of the most noisy atheism, the stage in which I believe he died. It was indeed the fashion of the hour; even to the fastidious Colvin, the humblest pleasantry was welcome if it were winged against God Almighty or the Christian Church. It was my own proficiency in such remarks that gained me most credit; and my great social success of the period, not now to be sniffed at, was gained by outdoing poor Clifford in a contest of school-boy blasphemy. I thought the more of this when I heard afterwards through Tait of some of Cliffords's former vagaries of opinion, and of the mark of the cross with which he used to hallow his examination papers at Cambridge. He was a very brilliant fellow and he never grew up. I remember when he agreed to manage the scientific part of the *Academy* for Appleton: nothing, as I was told, could ever induce him to be up to time with his work; arrears gathered in the

## ON MYSELF

scientific department up to monstrosity; Appleton himself, it is like enough, would be a little to leeward with the financing department; and one way or another at least, the whole affair blew up. Clifford was the most to blame, so I heard, and so, knowing Appleton's delightful temper, I am well prepared to believe; but the scientific Ariel had not the least idea he was in fault: and his talk at the time consisted almost entirely of humorous proposals for revenge upon poor Appleton. He used to plan at dinner time how to decoy the editor of the *Academy* to a desert island, or to wall him up in the safe where Henriot kept his explosives; and whether or not Appleton lost in money, I am sure that Clifford gained a vast deal of enjoyment from the quarrel. The last time I saw him, the hand of death was visibly upon him; not long after John Collier and his wife carried him to Madeira to die, in about the thirtieth year of his age and surely not more than the fifteenth of his character. Clifford on this occasion I saw; Swinburne I was to have seen. But this was in that somewhat stormy period of the bard's existence, when those who loved him best were sometimes tempted to desire his absence; and after consulting a common friend, it was judged unwise to send an invitation. I regret this the more, as Swinburne also, like the rest of us, was on the high seas of blasphemy; so that had I met him then, I might have had a chance of shining; and much of what he has since done and become, induces me to think I should value his esteem. I could tell a lot of funny stories of the days when he was partial to the bottle, and I had rather not. Some other gentleman will probably preserve them.

# JOHN, VISCOUNT MORLEY

## PARLIAMENT

### I

Of all the thousand felicities of youth what can surpass the elation of a literary apprentice, free from tyrannous ambition and conscious of disinterested public spirit, yet alive to the uses and adaptabilities of life, one day finding a gate open for him in the great parliamentary turnpike road? After seeking a parliamentary seat in Blackburn in 1869, and at Westminster in 1880—both of them forlorn hopes—in the spring of 1883 I was elected member for Newcastle-on-Tyne. Success was mainly due to the influence of Spence Watson, a member of the Society of Friends, active in the field of education, with all the sympathy of the Liberals of his time in the emancipation of certain foreign communities abroad, with a stirring gift of the tongue, and a brave and noble heart. The constituency was the largest, I think, of any borough in the kingdom at that time, and my supporters, though the middle class was not absent, consisted mainly of the skilled artisans of the great Elswick factory and other like concerns of less renown. We held the seat for a dozen years, not without fighting seven severe battles in that short span. My colleague to begin with—it was a constituency with two members—was Joseph Cowen, a picturesque figure, of much political information, supposed with or without foundation to have been mysteriously concerned with Orsini and his bombs, affecting the costume

## ON MYSELF

and native accent of the Northumbrian pitman, and with an extraordinary gift of florid, impassioned, ingenious and overwrought rhetoric, to which it was impossible to listen without wonder and even admiration, provided, as Bright caustically said of Cowen's last speech in Parliament, you did not attend to what he said. His practical defect was that he could not work with other people; he was always insisting on better bread than could be made of wheat, and though he had all his life truly professed himself the most ardent of Home Rulers, we were forced in our many struggles to count him as an enemy, not a friend. He was much swayed by easily irritated personal prepossessions, in a domain that ought to stand, so far as infirmities of human nature will allow, above such dire impediments to love of plain truth for its own sake. As it happened, he violently disliked and distrusted the Liberal leader and all the coin that came from the Gladstonian mint.

A transition from books, study, and the publicist's pen to the vicissitudes of political action is not much favoured by happy precedents. Let us not be shy of going too far back. The most historically influential type among famous men of letters, say what we will, is Cicero, the immortal, the all-wise Tully, and we know Cicero's blood-stained end on the Italian sea-shore, attended by the ill-omened flight of crows from the temple of Apollo. To pass to nearer times and more moderate names. We need say nothing of Clarendon, Halifax, Bolingbroke, or Addison, the first of half a dozen men of letters who held the post of Irish Secretary. The practice has been commoner in France than here, where in fact it has been rare, with Macaulay, Disraeli, Bulwer, for exceptions.

## JOHN, VISCOUNT MORLEY

Tocqueville, for instance, was a publicist of the first order, but a third-rate minister. Frenchmen will tell you that the literary event of the early nineteenth century was Chateaubriand's *Genius of Christianity* (1802), the most superb rainbow that ever rose in a storm-beaten sky. By and by this great writer, who did not fear Napoleon, took to politics on the Bourbon side, wrote a pamphlet so effective that Louis XVIII. counted it worth a whole army, then became an ardent member of the worst of restoration ministries, went to the Congress of Verona to advocate the worst of policies, tempted France into her war with Spain. To-day the book that once was a spring from which a flow of moral ideas flowed over a new generation is dead, its writer's politics are matter of universal condemnation, and his name seems sunk under long eclipse. Thiers, the ablest if not the greatest Frenchman of his century after Waterloo had closed an era, said he would willingly give the writing of ten successful histories for a single happy session in the Assembly, or a single fortunate campaign in arms. Thiers, however, had a weakness for loud superlatives of this kind, as when he declared that rather than see the Austrian eagle on the Vatican, he would destroy a hundred constitutions and a hundred religions. Most of the men I have known would rather have written the *Decline and Fall* than have been Mr. Pitt. In the present case, that immortal history assuredly was no more within reach and compass than were the triumphs of Austerlitz, Rossbach, or Trafalgar. The choice was the more modest selection between an outdoor publicist on the one hand, and member of the House of Commons on the other, with all the advantages of a wider and closer field

## ON MYSELF

of political observation, and all the chances of influence that this position carries with it.

With cordial solicitude Arnold had pressed me three years before to aspire to the place held in Paris at the time by a serious and admirable journalist—"a proud and very useful place, where you would be more useful, happier, more yourself, than in Parliament." A man might well be proud of being thought of in association with John Lemoigne—the most perfect example of the political journalist, as he has been well described, to whose nature the complacent banalities of the hour were antipathetic, whose style was short, clear, neat; abounding in body without inflation; who went straight to point and fact with the speed and lightness of a well-shot arrow from the bow; whose voice amid the daily clamour of a hundred journals detached itself with the ring of true metal. Perhaps Arnold was right; he was certainly kind, for such a place was no mean prize. Who knows? A great scholar of our day has observed that the studious man is more apt in practice to over-rate than under-value those who are engaged in active life. No doubt he has to leave some of the favourite parcels of his baggage at the door of the House, but then politics are not by any means the only profession of which this is true. There are men enough, though not too many, to show that a man may be idealist without being doctrinaire or what has been called a walking theorem, and practical without being pure empiric. Half a dozen English writers were then of eminent rank in political equipment, and very considerable in their interest for readers of training in books and ideas like their own. But I have heard every one of them complain that any influence of his on res-

possible statesmen was of a peculiarly academic sort (though one or two financial experts among them were from time to time casually consulted), and their political friendship was no better and no worse than platonic. No wonder : for it is all-round responsibility for one thing, and fuller knowledge of decisive facts for another, that make all the difference. However this may have been, no words can really be needed to explain why now and then a man should grow wearied of decent proficiency among the horns and strings of the orchestra, and resolve to try his tread upon the stage, where, besides the declamations of the scene, he is freshened by pithy asides in the coulisses. A man to be sure ought to be himself, as Arnold said, but he is strangely fortunate if, as Horace put it to Maecenas, he does not in his hour wish to be somebody else.

In my example were some antecedents that exposed an experiment to peculiar risks. It seemed absurd for one who had begun on the literary side of his life by repudiating conventions, to launch into political action which has for its very first working principle compliance with conventions. What was the sense of a chartered preacher against Menpleasers embarking on an enterprise whose whole chance of success depended, either in a broad or narrow sense, on pleasing a majority out of 20,000 or 30,000 men with votes, and, apart from votes, with some decided convictions and prejudices on sacred things having nothing to do with parliament ? The party enemy on the Tyne was naturally not slow to let fly his bolts against my theological opinions, and of that I made no complaint. I declined to answer questions, and I only made a single reference to the matter in two or three

## ON MYSELF

sentences, in which I promised them that it should be my last, as indeed it was. "Religion," I said, "has many dialects, many diverse complexions, but it has one true voice, the voice of human pity, of mercy, of patient justice, and to that voice your candidate, to the best of his knowledge and belief, has always done all he could to listen." I frankly confessed that when I learned how some good men and women were distressed and perplexed by hostile asseveration to my disadvantage in this great chapter of human things, I had been much inclined to wish that I had never come among them to disturb their peace and comfort of mind. Here all public utterances on the matter came to what most people regarded as an honourable end, nor was I ever conscious of the cold shoulder in private.

## II

On the day—so glorious in the anticipation of men—when he was to walk up the floor with me to take my seat, Chamberlain warned me that after the opening hours men found that life in the House of Commons answered none of their expectations. At first, like other people, I did not escape disappointments, but I soon reflected that what was good enough for men like Gladstone and Bright was quite good enough for me. Clarendon says of Coventry, Lord Keeper in King Charles's day, that "he had in the plain way of speaking and delivery, without much ornament of elocution, a strange power of making himself believed, the only justifiable design of eloquence." No bad aim for any sober man's ambition in any day. So, without any special aptitudes for the House, except a general desire to speak the



## JOHN, VISCOUNT MORLEY

truth, which is one of its surest aptitudes, I was bound to persevere, and people were indulgent. The daily comradeship of men of action blessed with good sense and public spirit engaged in common causes must be counted one of the truest pleasures of life, notwithstanding even Burns's "dear deluding joy of joys." The inspiration of such comradeship was not in the least marred by the double-edged sayings of ancient wisdom about friends turning into foes, and your enemy of to-day becoming your ally of the morrow.

The waste of time, where so much of it goes to what has the singular peculiarity of being neither business nor rest, to one whose years had been industrious and practical, was not far short of heart-breaking, though perhaps after all the House of Commons is by no means the place where one's waste of time is worst. With a rueful memory I many a time recalled that Franklin and Washington never made speeches more than ten minutes long. I thought of their countryman whose speeches were too lengthy for their pith, and who was compared to a train of fifteen cars only conveying a single passenger. Some mistook popularity for consideration, while others were influential without being popular. Some were useful and meritorious without being interesting. Some presented the painful phenomenon of great talents without great minds—men whom the discovery of a new hare to hunt delighted as if the hare were some new social truth, and who seemed incapable of being either used up or worn out. Then there were the troops of men who not only coveted the "loud applause and Aves vehement" of the majority—that was natural—but with whom it seemed axiomatic that "the country" or "our people" could be the dupe of any claptrap that

## ON MYSELF

appeared to fit the humour of an hour. This was far from natural, and committed both individuals and parties to many a dangerous blunder. It was just as true of one British party as the other.

Randolph Churchill exclaimed to me one day, "Ah, but then Balfour and you are men who believe in the solution of political questions." This belief may or may not be a weakness, yet the alternative that the statesman is a man who does not believe in the solution of political questions, was startling. It was said of Thirlwall's *History* that, though his principles of criticism were sound, he always seemed like Lord Eldon to exercise his ingenuity in evading a decision of the question. In the writer of history I for one have no quarrel with this, but it is not politics. In Parliament, as out of it, one sighs heavily over those optimistic hearts who, through blasts that are destroying forests, throwing down strong walls, laying harvests waste, and sweeping away a whole generation of men, keep the fingers on the dial-plate of their barometer nailed firm at "*Set Fair.*" They are mainly useless, and they are provoking. In the House again, as out of it, in synods, oecumenical councils, and everywhere else, are always men who will fight as stubbornly over the thin shadow of a shade of difference as if it was cardinal, fundamental, covered the whole ground, and settled the main case. So there were the kindred men who habitually insist on mistaking the ephemeral for the Day of Judgment.

Much of parliamentary debate is dispute between men who in truth and at bottom agree, but invent arguments to disguise agreement and contrive a difference. It is artificial, but serves a

## JOHN, VISCOUNT MORLEY

purpose in justifying two lobbies and a party division. You have patiently to learn the wholesome lesson, that wisdom may be wisdom even when she chooses rhetorical apparel. You cannot expect to escape a continual exhibition of the common error of politics, and of much besides, the attribution to one cause of what is the effect of many; nor the vexation of listening to the wrong arguments for the right object. Above all, one often felt the pregnant truth, that most mistakes in politics arise from flat and invincible disregard of the plain maxim that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be. But then here too parliament is only representative. Nowhere are you more puzzled than in political battle for a working reply to Goethe's searching and pathetic interrogatory, "Whatever are we to do with people who mean well?" And what with those who will have it that if a thing be desirable enough it must be possible? In truth the theorist, idealist, doctrinaire, or by whatever name we choose for the salt of the earth, is exposed to one curious peril of his own. He often becomes in business excessively, narrowly, and tiresomely pragmatical and opportunist, and actually cultivates near sight. With or without cause he suspects himself, and is bent on showing that he is as fit for the profession of real politics as the best of them. There is a danger in the opposite direction of which I might perhaps have been more sensible. Windham was the idolater of Burke, for whom I should have had none but good words if only, by the way, he had not been the champion of bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and the slave trade. "From the indomitable bravery of his disposition," says Brougham of Windham, "and his loathing of everything mean, or that savoured of truckling to

## ON MYSELF

mere power, he was not infrequently led to prefer a course of conduct or a line of argument because of their running counter to public opinion or the general feeling." This is a weakness, however, which Parliament is no bad place to cure.

The ruinous struggle with Irish obstruction that began in 1880 was practically over in 1883, and when all is said on that ugly episode I saw nothing to shake my faith in the inherent virtues of representative government or of the party system, or in the House of Commons as a sovereign institution. The test was severe, for I sat there five-and-twenty years (1883-1908), and for seventeen of them we were in a minority. The House was generally, though by no means always, true to its better traditions. Still, we are bound to be amused at Disraeli's heroic extravagance when he was bold enough to say, "No really bad bill is ever passed."

Detestation of elected assemblies was the one rooted conviction in the vague and vacillating brain of Napoleon III., and Bismarck pronounced parliamentary life to have something demoralising in it, making even the best man of the world grow vain, taking to the tribune like women to their toilette. If anybody supposes that troublesome vanity is always absent even from selected cabinets and councils of State, he is much deceived. What satisfaction, and surely not quite out of season, to copy from a letter of Cavour's: "I believe you can do with a parliament many things that would be impossible to absolute power. An experience of thirteen years has convinced me that an honest and energetic ministry, that has nothing to fear from revelations in the House, and is not in a humour to be frightened by the violence of extreme parties, has everything to

## JOHN, VISCOUNT MORLEY

gain by parliamentary contests. I have never felt so weak as when Parliament was not sitting. Besides, how could I betray the principles of my life? I am the son of liberty, and it is to liberty I owe all I am. If her statue must be veiled, it is not for me to do it. 'The parliamentary road is longer, but it is surer.' Material for cheap irony about government by majority of votes abounds, but a good enough answer lies in the witticism that we must either count or fight, and counting is better than fighting.

In reading Tocqueville's *Souvenirs* at a later date I was surprised to find his tone so bitter towards nearly every one of his contemporaries. There is a striking passage where he describes his miseries in Parliament, and his essential unfitness for success in an uncongenial atmosphere. One reason was his readiness to turn aside to reflect, instead of acting; though, to be sure, he was a man who might have seen that reflection is often more real than what looks like action. There are good expressions and fertile thoughts: these Tocqueville could not miss. Only one could wish that he might have been a trifle easier and more lenient about men who, though not great, were better equipped for the public service than himself. It would be childish to expect a man in affairs to equal the virtue of Wordsworth, who said that in no part of his writing had he ever mentioned the name of any contemporary, that of Buonaparte only excepted, save for the purpose of eulogy. Chateaubriand in his famous six volumes of memories lets out some awkward secrets in his own ostentatious genius, but his vainglory was on so grand a scale that he takes but little trouble either way about other people. There is this to be said for Tocqueville, that he wrote his recollec-

## ON MYSELF

tions after 1850, when the iron had entered his soul, when his hopes, public aspirations, private illusions and ideals, had all foundered in the Second Empire. Still, he would have been happier in his memories if he had accepted Gladstone's maxim to a friend, "It is always best to take the charitable view, especially in politics"; or what Cobden said of Palmerston, "I believe he is quite sincere; the older I get, the more do I believe in men's sincerity." These two were men of the high responsible world, and they were great men, perfectly aware of the force of the Medicean truth that States are not governed by paternosters. Eldon once asked Mr. Pitt whether men were governed by decently honourable principles, or oftener by motives low and corrupt. Pitt replied that he had a favourable opinion of men as a whole, and he believed the majority were really actuated as a whole by fair meaning and intention. Let us add to this a rider in the words of Gibbon upon Pitt's great rival, Fox: "*Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempted from the taint of malevolence, vanity, and falsehood.*"

## W. H. DAVIES

I had now been living in London for some time and, although I was still under the fascination of certain sides of its life, such as its magnificent shops, its fine old squares, its churches and other public buildings, yet, for all that, I was beginning to feel the need of a short change. The spring of the year had come, and I could neither get pleasure from meeting friends nor from staying at home and doing my best creative work. So one fine Monday morning I started out for a two weeks' walk, telling no one of my intention and leaving all my letters to accumulate until I returned.

My preparations for this journey were simple indeed, for I always had the free use of my two arms. In the first place I took a bath and put on an old clean shirt and a pair of clean socks. After that I took another light and clean shirt, which I rolled up as small as possible, and managed to get into my hip pocket. Then I took my razor, a comb, a piece of soap, a needle and thread, a toothbrush, a small nailbrush for my clothes and boots—all of which I wrapped in a handkerchief and which now filled a side pocket in my coat. In the other side pocket I carried my pipe, tobacco and matches.

Seeing me standing there, no one would think for one moment that I was equipped for a two weeks' journey. And, seeing that I would take another bath at the end of the first week and put on the clean shirt, discarding the old one for good—seeing that I would do this, I would, of course,

## ON MYSELF

have very little to encumber me during the second week. The same handkerchief would do for the whole time, for I would wash it as often as I liked in the wayside pools or streams, and dry it in a few minutes in the wind and sun as I walked along. My only extravagance on this journey would be to buy a new pair of socks at the end of the first week and throw away the dirty ones. Other things, contained in my other pockets, such as a lead pencil, a small book for scribbling in, a pocket-knife, money, etc., I need not mention, for these things were always with me. So when I started on my two weeks' journey I had the satisfaction of knowing that my looks did not betray me; and if I met a friend in the first hour or two, he would not know but what I was only out for a short walk.

The difference between a good walker and a bad one is that one walks with his heart and the other with his feet. As long as the heart is eager and willing, the strain on the body is not very important; and it is only at night, when his long journey is done, that a man's muscles feel swollen and stiff. This means that no man should go forth as a wanderer unless he is a true lover of Nature; for it is the ever-changing scenery that keeps his heart light until the end of his day's walk.

Nothing has given me more happiness in the past than to spend the whole month of May in wandering about the country-side. I am not free for the first day or two of the care that my friends have called at my rooms in Town and found them unoccupied; and letters have been dropped into my letter-box that may require an immediate answer. But on the third day my new life brings me new thoughts, and I no longer think of friends, letters or enemies. Under a



## W. H. DAVIES

fine rainbow, whose arc encircles the whole world, there is no space for an enemy.

When I am in Town and meeting people almost every day, they seldom leave me without first trying to prejudice my mind against another. I could always say to myself, on their appearance—‘Here they come again, to take away a little more of my innocence.’ How it would sweeten the lives of these dangerous gossips, and broaden their minds too, if they went out into the world alone for a month in every year.

It must not be thought from these words that when I go walking all my delight is in Nature, and that I am not curious to know something about the lives of other wanderers whom I meet on the road. For instance, I shall never forget the aggressive little bantam man I once met between St. Albans and Luton, who assured me that he had the power, by a few swift tricks, known only to himself, of bringing the biggest man flat to the earth in less than twenty seconds! And he had only just finished telling me this when we met a tall, fat gipsy, who inquired, in a civil voice, whether we had seen anything of his strayed pony.

‘No,’ answered my little bantam man, annoyed at the gipsy’s height and the size of his belly—‘No, and if we had we would not give you any information.’

With these bitter words the bantam suddenly rushed forward, and with his two fists began to beat a wild tattoo on the gipsy’s belly; and then, with the same lightning speed, sprang back to safety, expecting to see the giant fall flat to the earth. But to our surprise, instead of this happening, the gipsy only laughed, and put himself in the attitude to fight in earnest. I must confess

## ON MYSELF

that I was just as much surprised as my little bantam friend, for I had always thought that that place, especially when big, was the most vulnerable place to attack.

I was not quite quick enough to see whether the bantam's fists sank into the man's belly as they would into a soft feather pillow, or whether the blows slid off like water from a duck's back—whichever it was, it was quite certain that the life within that round place was not disturbed in the least. In fact, the gipsy, to prove that he was nothing the worse for that vicious attack on his belly, stuck it farther out, as a challenge to my little bantam to repeat his performance.

This experience, and others that I have mentioned elsewhere, gives the Open Road a certain liveliness at times; while Nature still keeps her interest for a man when he travels alone.

But I have found that the majority of these tramps—who call themselves 'true travellers'—are not quite so pugnacious as the little chap I have just mentioned above. They talk loud and big, it is true, but they are really quite harmless when it comes to action. They are only ordinary mortals after all. That is to say—every man has the heart of a bull when he is meeting nothing but peaceful cows; but when the bull himself is met, we would all prefer to have no witness to our courage.

In spite of my knowledge of tramps, and my experience with them, I must admit that I was once deceived by one of them in a most extraordinary way. The man's voice was so quiet, and he expressed himself in so few words, that I could not help thinking he must be a man of tremendous power, and applied the proverb to him, that 'still waters run deep.' Why are we

## W. H. DAVIES

so apt to do this, seeing that proverbs are often foolish things to listen to and almost always bear a second meaning? For instance, what does it matter whether still waters run deep or shallow waters make much noise—they are to be judged by their clearness and absence from mud, and nothing else. We meet so many quiet men that have nothing to say, and that accounts for their silence. And we must admit that a number of our loudest talkers are full of interesting ideas, although they use too many words to express them.

But the thing that most impressed me with this man, whom I have just mentioned, was not so much his quiet voice and the few words he uttered, but a peculiar way he had of opening one side of his lips and showing a glint of white teeth. This made him look a very dangerous man indeed. And matters were not helped much when the first words he said were—‘My parents were both born in England, but I have enough foreign blood in my veins to make myself dangerous if anyone tries to take a liberty with me.’

I was so impressed by this man’s looks and manner, that I really expected to see him, in case of emergency, turn into a human porcupine, with his body suddenly bristling with scores of knives, daggers and stilettos. The glint of this man’s white teeth could mean nothing else, I felt certain of that. ‘If we are attacked by anyone, even a dozen men,’ thought I, ‘no one will be able to touch or lay hands on this man; and my own safety, standing behind his back, will be absolutely certain, and be a matter of more amusement than fear.’

All this was foolish for, that very night, when there was a skirmish in the lodging-house kitchen,

## ON MYSELF

in which every person was forced to take a part, because of so many people being in a limited space—what happened then? This new friend of mine, instead of bristling like a porcupine, vanished as mysteriously as a white butterfly—a butterfly that has not been seen to leave the open light. The very fact that he had been able to do so, shows how much fear had quickened his wits; for if he had not left the room while the quarrel was young and before a blow had been struck, it is certain that he would not have been able to do so in the confusion that followed. Yes, he not only vanished, but did not even have enough courage to return after the battle was over and claim his bed, which he had already paid for.

What I like so much about meeting these strange people on the Open Road, is their plain and simple characters, which can be known, as a rule, in a few short hours. Things are different in our higher grades of society. When I am asked if I know a certain man, and answer 'Yes,' I often feel inclined to add with a touch of irony—'but only his face.' For I certainly cannot understand why one writer, who professes a great admiration for women, has never written a love-song, and never uttered a fine phrase of a woman's grace or beauty. While another author, who is fond of drink, has never written a drinking song, or said one word in praise of drink or against it. They make literature a mask to hide their real personality, and how can they expect to attain that strength which only comes through honesty and sincerity?

But the simple people we meet on the Open Road never go to theatres, and their real life never reflects the artificial life of the stage. They always seem to behave naturally, and never

W. H. DAVIES

appear to be self-conscious and affected. They never affect the manners of their betters—unless they imitate them among themselves for their own amusement.



## NOTES

### BENVENUTO CELLINI

Born, Florence, 1500; died, Florence, 1571. He was a sculptor and goldsmith. He is best known as the author of the *Memoirs*, one of the most frank autobiographies in existence. He dedicated it to Benedetto Varchi with the following sonnet:

This my sore-travailed life I now inscribe  
To thank the God c<sup>t</sup> Nature, He who gave  
My soul to me, and took such care of it  
That high diverse things I have done, and live.

He my cruel destiny of offence deprived:  
And life now glorious, and boundless power,  
Grace, strength, and beauty are in me so shown  
That many I pass and o'ertake who passed me.

Only I sorrow greatly now I know  
What precious time in vanity was lost.  
Our fragile thoughts are carried on the wind.

But since repentance avails not, I'm content,  
Climbing as far as I descended, "Welcome,"  
To reach the Flower of this fair Tuscan land.

Mr. Augustine Birrell says:—'We seem to hear the rascal laughing in his grave. His atmosphere surrounds you; you smile when you ought to frown, chuckle when you should groan, and—O final triumph!—laugh aloud, when, if you had a rag of principle left, you would fling the book into the fire.'

The reason for our liking of him is the ingenuous manner in which he relates all his deeds and misdeeds. As he grew older, Cellini became more

## ON MYSELF

sober and respectable. In 1554 his claim to be admitted among the Florentine nobles was formally recognized. When Michael Angelo died in 1564, Cellini, but for his illness, would have represented Sculpture at his funeral. In 1571 he died of pleurisy and was buried with public honours in the Church of the Annunziata.

The text used is that of Roscoe's translation (1822) as revised in the *World's Classics Series* (Oxford University Press).

## SAMUEL PEPYS

Born 1633, son of a London tailor; died 1703. Fifty volumes of his manuscripts are preserved in the Bodleian. His 'Diary' was not deciphered till 1825, when it was edited by Lord Braybrooke. Mr. Brimley Johnson says that the letter-writers or diary-keepers are authors by instinct, worthy members of that elect fraternity who must in some way be expressing themselves and their ideas; among the artists born, not bred. The reason why Pepys, more than others, has been able to achieve success, is the fidelity with which he chronicles events. He relates that he twice pulled his wife's nose, and once gave her a bad blow on the eye; but he describes, too, a scene at night when his wife attacked him with red-hot tongs!

Stevenson said of him, 'It seems he has no design but to appear respectable and here he keeps a private book to prove he was not.' The main merits of this book which keep it perennially pleasant are its engaging frankness; the meticulous care with which even petty incidents are recorded, the candour which characterizes his description of domestic dissensions, the



## NOTES

intimate knowledge which he displays of the affairs of State, and above all the absence of pose. As Mr. Ponsonby says: 'We laugh with him and we laugh at him.'

The piece selected describes 23 April 1661, the Coronation of King Charles II.

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Born at Geneva, 1712; died 1778 at Ermenonville. He was the son of a watchmaker and tried his hand at various professions, having been by turns, notary's assistant, engraver of watches, domestic servant, musician, and vagabond. But all the while he carried on his self-education and studied literature, science, and philosophy. In 1743 he came to Paris and by his operas and comedies attracted the attention, among others, of Diderot. His first work, *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts* (1850), was written under Diderot's inspiration, and was crowned by the Academy of Dijon. He then returned to his own country, Switzerland, and wrote in 1754 his *Discours sur l'Inégalité* in which he put forward the theory that private ownership of property was the source of all social ills. His *La Nouvelle Héloïse* came out in 1761, the *Contrat Social* in 1762, and *Émile* also in 1762.

The last book was condemned by the Sorbonne and ordered by the Parliament to be burnt by the common executioner. Hume offered him refuge in England, and he reached London in 1766. His *Confessions* were partly written in England.

Rousseau's book is a curious psychological study. It is full of incidents marked by passion and intrigue and even vice; and yet the author

## ON MYSELF

apparently expected that at the end his character would emerge as one of great virtue and uprightness.

The portion selected in this volume is the beginning of Book IV of the *Confessions*, and the first paragraph refers to Madame de Warrens, 'a young and comely lady, recently converted to the Roman communion, frank, kind, gay, and as devoid of moral principles as any creature in the Natural History'. It was under her roof that he found shelter at Annecy, where he had fled from his work as engraver of watches.

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Born 1706; died 1790. His father migrated to New England in 1682. Benjamin was born in Boston. In 1732 he started a newspaper, 'Poor Richard's Almanack' which he continued for twenty-five years. In 1736 he was appointed Clerk of the General Assembly. He lived to be three times President of Pennsylvania. His last public act was to forward, in his capacity as president of an Abolition Society, a memorial to Congress calling upon it 'to devise a means of removing this inconsistency [the maintenance of negro slavery] from the character of the American people'.

The *Memoirs* are marked by excessive modesty and depict only one side of Franklin's character and career. They tell us of his civic activities in Philadelphia. But we shall be mistaken in thinking of these as his only or even most important work. He was a great man of science; one of the most notable scientific discoveries—that of electricity—is associated with his name. In private life he was a steadfast friend and a sage

## NOTES

counsellor. We have to supplement the knowledge derived from the *Memoirs* with much more information before we can know the real Franklin.

### EDWARD GIBBON

Born near London, 1737; died 1794. As a child he was sickly, and he was constantly moved from one educational institution to another. But he was devoted to books, and he said that he would not exchange his love of reading for the treasures of India. Early in life he was attracted by history and he read Herodotus, Xenophon and Tacitus when almost a boy. By the time he was sixteen his diseases disappeared and he became quite healthy. He joined Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1752. In 1753 he joined the Roman Catholic Church and thus ceased to be a member of the University. His father sent him immediately to Lausanne in Switzerland under the care of a Calvinist minister. This exile and the tutor's influence brought him back to the Protestant fold in 1754. 'It was here,' he says, 'that I suspended my religious inquiries, acquiescing with implicit belief in the tenets and mysteries which are adopted by the general consent of Catholics and Protestants.' His father died in 1770, and after two years he was able to establish himself in London. He was a member of Boodle's, White's, Brooks's and Almack's. Colman describes Gibbon at this period as sitting in a suit of flowered velvet, with a bag and sword, light and playful, tapping his snuff-box, smirking and smiling. In 1774 he became a member of Parliament; but he never once spoke there. He was appointed in 1779, as a Lord Commissioner of Trade. In 1776 he published the first volume of his *Decline and*

## ON MYSELF

*Fall of the Roman Empire.* It was received with much applause and the first impression was exhausted within a few days. In 1783 he left for Lausanne in the interests of economy. Two more volumes of the History had appeared in 1781, but he had been living in London beyond his means. For ten years he lived at Lausanne. Then he returned to London, where he died of dropsy.

## JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Born 1749; died 1832. German poet and philosopher; his best known work is the drama *Faust*. His autobiography is entitled *Poetry and Truth from my own life*. He was made familiar to English readers by Carlyle who kept repeating 'Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe'. Goethe's other works were *Dichtung und Wahrheit*; *Wilhelm Meister*; *Egmont*; and *Tasso*. For thought, truth in art, philosophy and science, Goethe did more in Germany than any other man. Of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the first two parts appeared in 1811, the third in 1814, and the fourth in 1831. Carlyle said of this autobiography in 1828:—'Goethe's 'Dichtung und Wahrheit', so soon as it is completed, may deserve to be reckoned one of his most interesting works. We speak not of its literary merits, though in that respect, too, we must say that few Autobiographies have come in our way, where so difficult a matter was so successfully handled; where perfect knowledge could be found united so kindly with perfect tolerance; and a personal narrative, moving along in soft clearness, showed us a man, and the objects that environed him, under an aspect so verisimilar, yet so lovely, with an air dignified and earnest, yet graceful,

## NOTES

cheerful, even gay : a story as of a Patriarch to his children ; such indeed as few men can be called upon to relate, and few, if called upon, could relate so well.'

### JOHN STUART MILL

Born 1806; died 1873. He was educated entirely by his father, the historian. In 1823 he joined the India House as junior clerk. In the same year he founded the Utilitarian Society. He published his *Logic* in 1843 and his *Political Economy* in 1848. In 1858 on the break up of the East India Company he retired with a pension. From 1865-68 he was a member of Parliament. His works include *On Liberty*, 1859; *Representative Government*, 1861; *Utilitarianism*, 1863; *The Subjection of Women*, 1869. The piece printed here is taken from his *Autobiography*, 1873. Morley said of this book half a century ago : 'If we are now and then conscious in the book of a certain want of spacing, of changing perspectives and long vistas; if we have perhaps a sense of being too narrowly enclosed; if we miss the relish of humour or the occasional relief of irony; we ought to remember that we are busy not with a work of imagination or art, but with the practical record of the formation of an eminent thinker's mental habits and the succession of his mental attitudes.'

### ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Born 1850; died 1894. One of the most fascinating personalities in English literature. His works include *Travels with a Donkey*,

## ON MYSELF

*Virginibus Puerisque, Treasure Island, Child's Garden of Verses, Master of Ballantrae.* The passage printed here is from 'Memories and Portraits', 1887.

Perhaps of Stevenson it is truer than of almost any other writer that his works inevitably lead us to an attempt to know the man. Even if this fragment of autobiography had not been in existence, his romances, short stories, and essays are quite enough to reveal his personality—one who was constantly harassed by ill-health and retained yet his zest in life; who was supremely blessed in the gift of friendship; who delighted in adventure whether of the soul or of the body; who retained to the end a child-like curiosity about the world; who wrote for the delight of many, whilst himself writhing in physical agony; whose words breathe a spirit of hope and high moral endeavour; who was a lover of beauty whether in words or form or deeds. The aroma of the man clings inseparably to every sentence that he wrote.

## JOHN VISCOUNT MORLEY

Born 1838; died 1922; educated at Lincoln College, Oxford, where he came under the influence of Mark Pattison. He took up a literary career on leaving the University and created profound influence by his book *Compromise*. He was editor of 'The Pall Mall Gazette' and of the 'Fortnightly Review'. His studies of Burke, Rousseau, Diderot, Cobden, and Walpole established his reputation as a man of letters. Then he entered Parliament and was almost immediately taken into the Cabinet by Gladstone whose most trusted lieutenant he was in the Home

## NOTES

Rule campaign. He held the offices of Irish Secretary, Indian Secretary, and Lord President of the Council. He retired from politics on the outbreak of the war in August 1914. The passages printed here are from his *Recollections*. The collected edition of his works in 15 volumes does not include his great *Life of Gladstone*. Brigadier Morgan calls his political career a triumph of character rather than a triumph of achievement. 'He presents the peculiar spectacle of a statesman who has left almost no trace on the statute-book, of a party leader who had no personal following, of an orator who lives not by what he spoke, but by what he wrote.'

### W. H. DAVIES

Born 1870. Poet and prose-writer. His *Collected Poems* are available in 2 volumes. He has written the story of his wandering life in *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*, and in his *Later Days*. This passage is taken from the second book. The main quality of his lyrics is the calm and peace caused by simple observation of nature. Most of his poems are autobiographical, although the poet does not force himself on our attention. The two volumes of his autobiography are delightfully unconventional; he has the gift of exquisite expression and of observing things usually overlooked. Much contact with nature has endowed him with the faculty of independent judgment.

---

CALCUTTA :—Published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, and Printed by P. Knight, 41, Lower Circular Road.









